

Raleigh Fire Department Reorganization, 1971

Research notes by Mike Legeros

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In the summer of 1971, the Raleigh Fire Department underwent an administrative reorganization. Three Assistant Chiefs were moved from shift work to day duty. District Chief positions were created. Fire Prevention positions were renamed and reclassified. And there were other changes. The impetus for change began in April, when the Raleigh City Manager received a report from the North Carolina League of Municipalities on the organizational structure and management practices of the fire department.

The report's author was future Raleigh Fire Chief Sherman A. Pickard, then Director of Services for the League. As he wrote in the introductory letter, "We have attempted to identify the apparent deficiencies and to recommend practical solutions. The major thrust of the recommendations in this report is to more efficiently utilize existing authorized personnel through improved organization and definition of functions."

At the time of the review, the Raleigh Fire Department consisted of 267 budgeted positions, with line personnel working 60-hour duty weeks in three platoons¹. Ten fire stations housed 11 engine companies and four truck companies. The eleventh fire station was under construction, and the twelfth engine had been advertised for bids.

Personnel were distributed as follows:

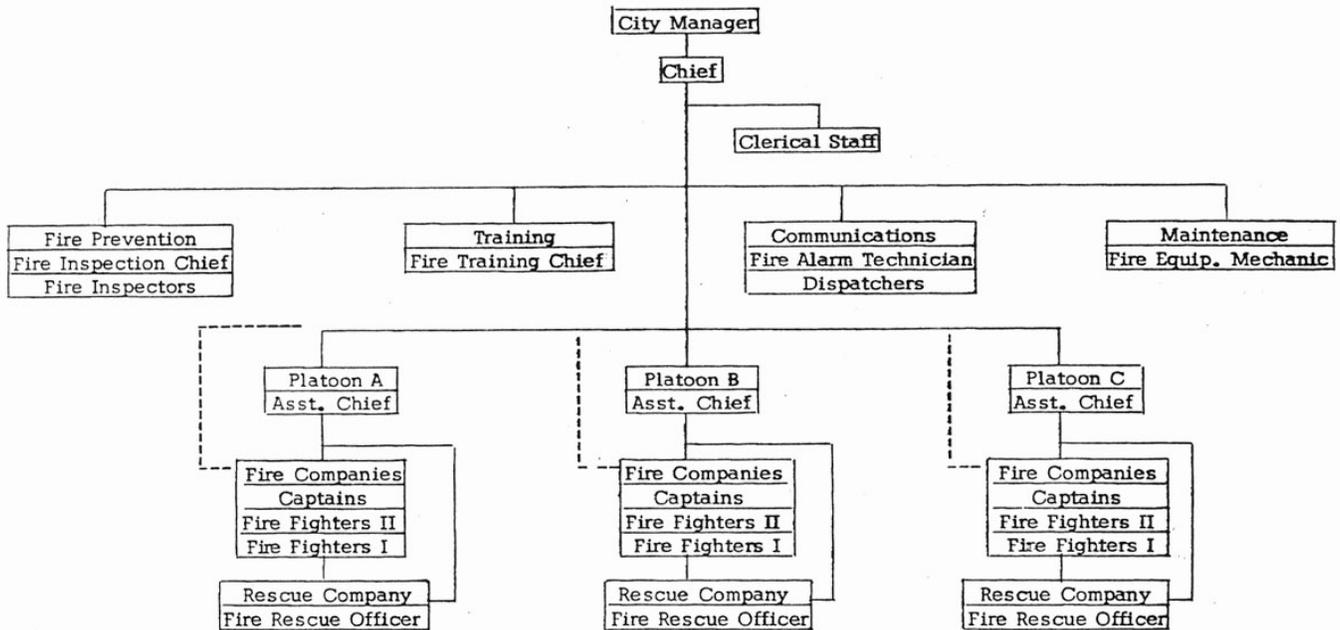
- Administration
 - Chief - 1
 - Clerk/Stenographer - 2
- Fire Prevention
 - Fire Inspection Chief - 1
 - Fire Inspector – 5
- Fire Suppression
 - Asst. Chief - 3
 - Captain – 3
 - District Chief² - 3
 - Driver/Operator (Firefighter II) - 54
 - Firefighter I - 132
 - Rescue Officer - 2
- Supporting Services
 - Training
 - Fire Training Chief - 1
 - Communications
 - Fire Alarm Technician – 2
 - Fire Dispatcher - 8
 - Maintenance
 - Fire Equipment Mechanic - 2

¹ The third platoon, "C" shift, was created on September 23, 1970.

² The three District Chiefs do not appear in the report's organizational chart. These were likely budgeted or planned positions, but not yet implemented.

See organizational chart on next page.

Raleigh Fire Department
Table of Present Organization
267 Budgeted Positions



--- Due to present organizational deficiencies, Company Captains often find it necessary to report directly to the Fire Chief

The report identified major deficiencies, and in particular stated that the growth of Administrative personnel had not kept pace with line personnel. Since August 8, 1962, records showed, a total of 134 positions had been added to the fire department. But only one position, a third Assistant Chief, had been added at the management level. That imbalance, they cited, was the reason for the major deficiencies:

- Due to obvious excessive span of control, the Chief was unable to effectively manage the department.
- Professional assistance was needed to handle administrative details.
- The department's mission of fire prevention was "not in proper perspective" to that of fire suppression.
- Vacation leave resulted in the absence of a chief officer on duty approximately three months each year.
- Training functions were staffed by a single Fire Training Chief, and with no administrative assistance. Thus his other duties resulted in neglect of department training functions.
- Due to the size of the vehicle fleet, and that a single mechanic worked 24 hours shift, there was no continuity in the maintenance program.

What were the recommended changes?

The department should be organized into three division: Codes and Standards (later renamed Fire Prevention), Fire Suppression (later renamed Fire Operations), and Services. The Fire Inspection Chief was raised to the pay grade of

Assistant Chief and renamed Fire Marshal. One of the three Assistant Chief positions was dropped, and the remaining two should be converted to day duty. They would oversee the Suppression and Services divisions.

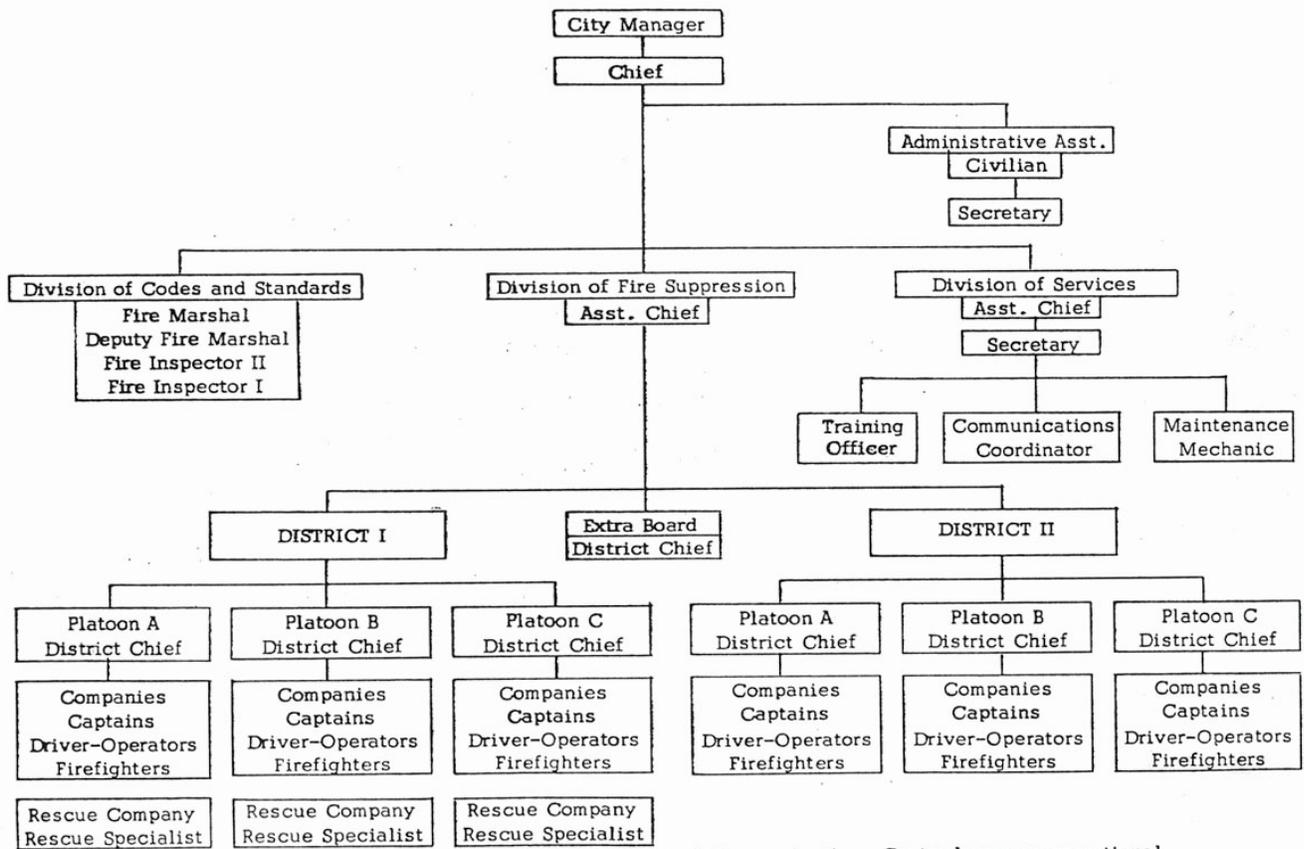
The report recommended the creation of a civilian Administrative Assistant, and ideally someone with a degree in Business Administration, Public Administrative, or a related field. The report cited the department's annual budget, now exceeding \$2,000,000. Its complexity required full-time attention, the report noted. District Chiefs were added, as a management level between the Asst. Chief of Suppression and company Captains. A second training position was recommended under Services.

The resulting distribution of personnel was:

- Administration
 - Chief - 1
 - Admin. Assistant (civilian) - 1
 - Asst. Chief - Division of Fire Suppression - 1
 - Asst. Chief - Division of Services - 1
 - Fire Marshal - Division of Codes and Standards - 1
 - Clerk/Stenographer - 2
- Codes and Standards
 - Deputy Fire Marshal - 1
 - Fire Inspector II and
 - Fire Inspector I - 4
- Fire Suppression and Rescue
 - District Chief - 7
 - Captain - 51
 - Driver-Operator (Firefighter II) - 54
 - Firefighter I - 132
 - Rescue Personnel - 2
- Supporting Services
 - Training Officer - 2
 - Fire Alarm Technician - 2
 - Fire Dispatcher - 8
 - Fire Equipment Mechanic - 1

See organizational chart on next page.

RALEIGH FIRE DEPARTMENT
RECOMMENDED TABLE OF REORGANIZATION
271 POSITIONS*



*This number will be reduced by 10 positions when the City's Central Communications Center becomes operational.
 This number assumes only 1 mechanic assigned day duty in lieu of the present 2 mechanics.

Was the report adopted, and the changes made? Yes, as news reports and budget documents reveal. The Fiscal Year 1971 budget lists authorized positions that are very close to the report's recommendations:

- Administration
 - Chief - 1
 - Asst. Chief - 2
 - District Chief - 6
 - Fire Training Chief - 1
 - Administrative Assistant (civilian) - 1
 - Clerk/Stenographer - 2
- Fire Prevention
 - Fire Marshal - 1
 - Inspector II - 2
 - Inspector I - 2
- Fire Suppression
 - Captain - 51
 - Firefighter II - 54
 - Firefighter I - 132
 - Rescue Officer - 2
 - Dispatcher - 8
 - Fire Alarm Technician - 2
 - Fire Equipment Mechanic - 2

The *Raleigh Times* on Saturday, August 7, 1971, announced the appointment of seven District Chiefs by Fire Chief Jack Keeter the day before:

- W. R. Hamilton, age 50, joined 1949, Captain in 1962

- R. E. Keith, age 41, joined 1951, Fire Training in Chief in 1963
- W. R. Mabry, age 44, joined 1949, Captain in 1962
- C. T. May, age 47, joined 1949, Captain in 1957
- S. J. Talton, age 48, joined 1950, Captain in 1957
- N. W. Walker, age 41, joined 1952, Captain in 1961
- D. H. Williams, age 44, joined 1952, Captain in 1964.

They joined a command staff that included:³

- Asst. Chief J. W. Goodwin Jr. (Suppression)
- Asst. Chief C. R. Puryear (Services)
- Fire Marshall A. R. Woodlief.

Then what happened?

Time moved forward. The third district was created on or about January 1, 1977. Then the fourth district in 2004. Another Fire Suppression management level was created in 1992, with the shift supervisor position of Battalion Chief. That position was renamed Division Chief in 2004, and District Chiefs were renamed Battalion Chiefs, also that year. Another Assistant Chief position was created in 2007, with the Asst. Chief of Training.

Finally, a number of the people mentioned above were promoted even higher. Later Assistant Chiefs included Norman Walker (Operations) and C. T. May (Services). In the big chair included Fire Chiefs Clarence Puryear (1973-74), Rufus Keith (1974-1982), and Sherman Pickard (1986-1995).

And where were their offices located during this period? That's the next article, a history of the chief's quarters...

³ The Administrative Assistant hired was Ken Farmer, now a well-known name in North Carolina's fire service.