

we have a lot of people who talk the dream, but myself.



Photo Courtesy City of Orange

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. and Fire Chief Robert Manganello, center of front row, are joined by city fire personnel who were promoted to captains and deputy chiefs during a City Hall ceremony.

Firefighters are promoted

Advances follow givebacks in Fire Department

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Recent promotions have created six captains and four deputy chiefs in the Orange Fire Department.

During a ceremony May 19 in the Martin DeMarzo Fire Department headquarters, Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. and Fire Chief Robert Manganello promoted Frank DeAngelis, James Rothenberger, Michael Mariano and Frank Sacco to the rank of deputy chief. They also promoted Matthew Kobaut, Mathew Piserchio, Joseph Moresco, Cosimo Politi, Robert Dangler and Jimmy Moresco to the rank of captain.

The promotions will help the department fill the leadership void left by the retirements of several veteran firefighters and commanders during the last few years. Hawkins and Manganello said the much-needed promotions were made possible by the overtime and compensatory-time concessions the firefighters' union agreed to earlier this year. The concessions initially allowed the city to rehire 12 firefighters that had been laid-off as a cost-cutting measure to close a multimillion-dollar deficit in the city budget.

Hawkins said the agreement with the Fire Officers Association will save the city \$363,000. However, it does not have any bearing on negotiations between the FOA and city officials, who have not been able to reach a deal in the same way as was done with Local

10 of the Firemen's Mutual Benevolent Association, the firefighters' union.

Ironically, the promotions increased the FOA's membership, effectively increasing its strength in relation to the city as a bargaining unit.

"In a continuing effort to save tax dollars in order to bring back the jobs of laid off and demoted employees, the city has continued to negotiate with our unions on salary and benefit givebacks," Hawkins said. "Recently, we were able to achieve an agreement on givebacks with the Fire Officers Association that will significantly reduce future salary, overtime, and acting pay costs."

Among the concessions: deputy chiefs will forego a salary increase for six months and receive one-half the increase in the next six months; captains will receive a one-third salary increase for six months and forego a full salary increase for 18 months.

"In this deep recession, the firefighters of Orange and their officers are setting an example for other communities," said Hawkins. "The members of the Orange Fire Department stand out as extraordinarily dedicated to protecting not only the safety of citizens but also the ability of taxpayers to feed their families and pay their taxes and mortgages in a national financial crisis."

Manganello declined to be interviewed. Elvin Padilla, president of Local 10, said he and the

union were happy about the promotions.

"The FOA union is separate from ours and they are not covered under the SAFER grant that we received," Padilla said, referring to a federal grant the city received. "It was only for new hires. It wasn't meant to address promotions because usually the system takes care of itself when it comes to moving individuals up."

"Last week's promotions fill a need in the department because the hierarchy is important," he continued. "You can't put soldiers on the field without officers because there would be chaos. It's key that we have officers in place."

Padilla said that the deal the firefighters' union reached with the city was a "package deal" that involved some concessions. Part of the agreement was to rehire all 12 of the laid-off firefighters on March 22; 12 new employees would be hired through the SAFER grant.

"Altogether we got 24 firefighters from the deal. Right now we're at 32 guys, and the additional two will put us at 56 firefighters, but the Washington Street firehouse is still closed," said Padilla. "With the promotions and new hires we can reopen that firehouse. This increases our manpower on the apparatus, but it doesn't increase the number of apparatus that are available to respond at any moment unless we reopen Washington Street."