

Hires, promotions occur following firefighter's arrest

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

After the arrest of a firefighter, city officials have moved to turn the page on the mini-scandal through fire and police hirings and promotions.

Passaic County prosecutors announced Oct. 27 that Reynolds Regis, 35, had been arrested as part of a drug distribution investigation. City officials immediately suspended Regis, without pay, pending the outcome of an investigation.

A memorandum, sent from the office of Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr., stated Regis was suspended and could not be admitted into any Fire Department building unsupervised. But city officials said they did not want the alleged activities to overshadow the rest of the department.

As part of that effort, city officials Oct. 31 conducted a swearing-in ceremony for five police officers and one firefighter. In addition, three members of the Fire Department were promoted and four police officers were move up to the rank of sergeant.

The five new officers are Victor Pickett Williams, James Edmund Rainforth, Nia Malika Hill, Ricardo Arias-Vasquez and Rafael Emilio Campos. The new firefighter is Jeremy Cannon.

The four officers who were promoted to the rank of sergeant were Joseph Tortorella, Isaac Eason, Wilbur Baptist and Aydil Olivera. They previously had been reduced in rank due to budget constraints. Hawkins said their promotions were the results of a tentative agreement between the city and their union and must be ratified by the members.

"They will be promoted to the rank of sergeant based on a tentative agreement reached that morning between myself, the administration and the union," Hawkins said. "Upon ratification by the union, the remaining officers will be re-promoted as per terms of the agreement."

The Fire Department promotions included Chief Robert Manganeli and Capts. Frank R. Scura and Alvin Spearman.

Hawkins said the new hires would address each department's serious manpower need but they will not cost the city money for training. He said the officers, who previously served in Newark and Paterson and were laid off due to budget problems, were trained prior to joining their former departments. The firefighter was laid off from Old Bridge.

The six first-responders were selected from what is considered the "Rice List," created through legislation sponsored by state Sen. Ron Rice that maintains a registry of laid-off public safety employees in New Jersey.