

South Tahoe not in a hurry to find permanent police chief

By Kathryn Reed

When Martin Hewlett walks into the City Council chambers this morning he won't be relegated to the back of the room. He will be at the big table at the front of the room.

Hewlett is acting police chief for South Lake Tahoe for the indefinite future. His first day on the job was to oversee the New Year's Eve chaos.



Martin
Hewlett

"I told the commanders to not burn down the city on my first day," Hewlett was able to joke days afterward since nothing newsworthy happened that night.

Hewlett took over for Terry Daniels who retired.

Hewlett, who prefers to be called captain and not interim chief, has been with the department since 1993. He worked his way from an officer to sergeant to lieutenant to captain, a position he has had for almost three years.

He has been in patrol, detectives and on the SWAT team.

Before coming to Tahoe, Hewlett was with Escondido Police Department for almost 10 years and with the Orange County Sheriff's Office for a year.

"Overall, I don't plan to make significant changes that will

affect anyone," Hewlett said. "I don't think it would be fair to the next person."

He isn't sure if he'll apply to be police chief. It isn't something he was aspiring to be.

"I will know better in the next few months after experiencing (the job). I will keep my options open," Hewlett said.

For now, Hewlett is captain and interim police chief, with some duties being spread to the lieutenants and sergeants.

City Manager Dave Jinkens is responsible for hiring the next police chief. The city manager hires all department heads except for the city attorney.

Jinkens expects to have the selection process in place in the next 30 to 60 days. Historically, the city has not used an outside recruiting firm to hire department heads. Jinkens believes this will be the case for the next chief as well.

"I don't think there will be a sense of urgency to do this since the council decided we needed an interim chief to realize the cost savings," Mayor Kathay Lovell said. "We are not trying to fill it today."

The position needs to be vacant for at least six months to be able to realize the benefits of the cost containment plan the council approved late last year.

It's possible Jinkens won't be the one to actually hire the next police chief, but to merely start the process. His contract expires in the summer. He has not indicated if he wants an extension. The council is divided over wanting to keep him employed.

At today's council meeting several employees who took early buyouts will be honored. Some of them have served for more than 20 years.

The meeting begins at 9am at Lake Tahoe Airport.