

Lewiston openings draw flood of applicants

By Sandra L. Lee of the Tribune

Wednesday, April 8, 2009

A deluge of job applications has hit Lewiston City Hall.

Two hundred, City Manager John C. (Jay) Krauss estimated.

That sounds about right, said James Jeffords, the human resources manager.

About 75 are for the 10 reserve firefighter positions. That application deadline has passed, but people have until today to apply for the eight to 10 short-term jobs - 12 to 18 months - in Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments. At a guess, about 45 applications have been received for those, Jeffords said.

Others are for seasonal positions.

None of the jobs are especially high-paying and they come with almost no benefits. The short-term jobs will be paid \$10 an hour. The city will use \$180,000 budgeted for red shirts, laborers from the Idaho Department of Correction prison at Orofino.

Maybe it's a reflection of the economy and layoffs elsewhere, Krauss said of what he calls Lewiston's own economic stimulus plan.

The fire reserve jobs are intended to save the city money by limiting the amount of overtime paid to full-time firefighters. The city council and the union recently approved a pay increase from \$9.81 an hour to a \$12 training wage and as much as \$2.50 an hour more once initial and advanced emergency medical certifications are completed.

The program, with the wage hikes, state retirement and a \$20,000 life insurance policy, is expected to cost the city about \$150,000 a year compared with the \$737,055 paid to fill overtime shifts with career firefighters.

Applications are being screened now and three days of testing, including oral interviews and physical agility, will start April 17, Jeffords said. Background checks also will be done before training begins.

Thirty-one of the 75 have some volunteer experience or have either completed or are working on their emergency medical technician certification, he said. About 50 percent have already had background checks.

"We got a good pool of folks," Jeffords said.

They won't be available for shift assignments until about Sept. 11, because they also have to complete a training academy that runs from May through August, he said.

The final number hired depends in part on what happens with contract negotiations with the five other governmental entities served by Lewiston's ambulance crews, Krauss said. Those discussions have included hiring six more people.

If that would happen, the department needs to prepare by having people ready to step into full-time positions as well as maintain a reserve roster, he said. "We don't want to end up back where we are today."

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