

## Chief Skelton reassigns 22 Holyoke police officers

By JANICE BEETLE

**HOLYOKE** — Police Chief Harold F. Skelton has reassigned 22 officers in an effort which he said Monday will provide more proper supervision and unity of command for all personnel.

In the next few days Mayor Ernest E. Proulx will receive a copy of a Dec. 26 letter in which the chief explained why the organizational structure changes were necessary.

He said the new structure, which has been under review for nine to 10

months, will become effective Jan. 2.

"The newly drawn organizational structure provides for unity of command throughout the department. The lines of authority are direct and clearly defined and the span of control within the physical limits," said Skelton in the letter.

The chief said the "span of control" is a term that describes the number of employees reporting directly to a person in an administrative or supervisory capacity.

"With the department currently at

full strength and more, the span of control was far too broad and under the former organizational structure, impossible for the chief of police to personally supervise," he said.

"I have therefore delegated some of the responsibilities by creating recommended levels of command," he said.

Skelton said the former police chief, Francis Sullivan, implemented extensive changes in the organizational structure of the Holyoke Police Department in 1974. Before Skelton became chief, Sulli-

van's system reverted to the "old standard" chain of command structure, Chief Skelton said.

Skelton said that system was "in effect antiquated or considered antiquated."

He gave eight guidelines which he said summarize the basic principles of police organizational effectiveness.

There should be a clear cut delegation of duties and responsibilities and an equitable distribution of the department work load, he said.

There should also be well delin-

eated lines of authority and sufficient delegation of authority.

Unity of command, coordinated and cooperative effort at every department level and overall administrative control are also important principles, he said.

The chief said he has also defined job descriptions for everyone in the department, including himself, "so everyone knows what their duties and responsibilities are."

"That has never been done before in the department," he added.

Those who were transferred are:

Officers Laurence P. Cournoyer, Patrick J. Higgins, Richard F. Connor, Wilfredo Guzman, Daniel L. Fallon Jr., John J. O'Connell, John M. Collamore, Francis L. Desjeans, Hercules Robinson, Robert E. Laramee, Detective Officers Bruce W. Holmes and Eva M. O'Connell, Capt. James M. Whalen, Paul H. Racine, John J.J. McMullan, Lt. William J. Gorham, Ralph J. Amirr and Russell Paquette, Detective Lt. Armand E. Laramee, and Sgts. Robert Wagner, Michael E. Sheedy Jr. and Alan C. Fletcher.

## Granby to allow addition

By TIMOTHY GILFOIL

**GRANBY** — The town's building inspector has granted the owner of a local trucking company a conditional permit for additional construction at his business despite objections from abutters to the property.

George Landry of 32 Pleasant St. had told selectmen two weeks ago that Building Inspector William D. Harrop Sr. "had no authority" to override a decision made by the Zoning Board of Appeals in 1979 which denied the Gerald Roberts Trucking Co. of 34 Pleasant St. a permit for additional construction that the board said would violate the town's zoning bylaws.

In a letter to Roberts this week, Harrop said that Granby Town Counsel Raymond Randall determined "after due consideration and study... that the construction of an addition for storage of personal property only is not a violation of the town of Granby zoning bylaws."

Harrop had told selectmen that he did not override any decision by the board because any company that applies for a permit, and is denied, may reapply.

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"I felt that since he (Roberts) was only going to use the buildings for personal storage, that it shouldn't be any problem," Harrop said.

Landry said even though Roberts claims the new building will be for personal use, it will still be an addition to the business.

"It will be attached to a business structure no matter how you look at it," Landry said.

Harrop told Roberts that the construction of the addition may continue if no direct access from the addition to the existing building is made and the only access to the addition will be "from the exterior directly to the existing grade level." Harrop also told Roberts he may only store personal property in the added building.

Landry had told selectmen that the present storage of tires at the site is diverting rainwater that runs off from a nearby field into a brook below his property and is causing water buildup.

Landry had said he and another abutter to the property, Ronald Laramee of 36 Pleasant St., may consider legal action to block the construction.



Photos by Michael Blackburn



## Winter sports

With winter in full swing, ice skates and skis — and at least one bicycle — were getting workouts during the past couple of clear, cold days in Western Massachusetts. Above, Tony Kennedy makes tracks on his skates, as Erine Rackham pedals her bicycle on the frozen surface of Paradise Pond in Northampton. Meanwhile, Judy Haupt, 7, of Metacomet Street in Belchertown, at right, goes cross-country skiing on Lake Metacomet.

## Lak interviews candidates for DPW position

By HENRY FILAR  
Chicopee bureau chief

**CHICOPEE** — Mayor Richard S. Lak interviewed two candidates for the new position of superintendent of the Department of Public Works Monday, but is not sure whether he will appoint either. He said late Monday afternoon that he found both to have strengths that would be invaluable in running the new umbrella agency, but he also found some weaknesses in some areas.

"I don't know whether I will make a choice from the two," Lak said. "I plan to review their resumes again, check notes made during the interviews, and think about it for the next few days before making a decision."

The \$35,000-a-year superintendent will supervise most construction and maintenance agencies in the city. The mayor and Board of Aldermen agreed to create the post, but postponed listing departments to be included in the DPW until the new superintendent is appointed and makes a recommendation.

The mayor declined to identify the two candidates, but said one is from Chicopee and the other from a nearby community. He said both have extensive experience in the construction field, particularly in highway and sewer projects and wastewater treatment operations.

Both, Lak said, fulfilled the specifications calling for a college degree in civil engineering and from three to five years of management experience.

He said he would not reveal the names of the candidates because they are not considered official finalists.

Lak originally was scheduled to interview a third candidate Monday. The mayor said the third, from the Boston area, decided to withdraw from consideration at this time "because of the job security he has in federal government."

The three candidates were chosen from a field of seven who submitted applications earlier this month. At that time, three were eliminated

because they had good engineering backgrounds but were considered weak in management experience, Lak said. One was disqualified because he did not have a college degree in civil engineering.

Lak said that if he makes a choice, the appointment will go to the Board of Aldermen for confirmation.

"I am sure the appointee will be subject to many questions when he faces the board," he said.

The mayor said the two candidates were interviewed for about two hours each. He said he was particularly pleased to have the assistance of George Hunter, retired superintendent of civil engineering at Westover Air Force Base, during the talks with the candidates.

## Interviews scheduled for position

**CHICOPEE** — Interviews are being scheduled for early next week for finalists in the search for a planning director, according to the director of the Office of Community Development.

Director Thomas Haberlin said Monday his secretary was arranging appointments for the seven finalists for the \$17,018-a-year job.

According to Haberlin, 17 applications had been received by the Dec. 7 deadline. After screening, seven were summoned for interviews.

Haberlin acknowledged that acting Planning Director Carol Covington of the Florence section of Northampton, was among those who will be summoned for the interview process.

He would not identify any of the other candidates.

Covington has been working on a part-time basis with the department while she pursues a master's degree in regional planning from the University of Massachusetts. She works three days per week in the office which is located on the third floor at City Hall and also attends Board of Appeals and Planning Board meetings.

Michelle Plourd, secretary to the Office of Community Development, said that of the other six, one is living in Springfield, one from Malden, and the rest are living in the New England area.

## Holyoke mourns WREB commentator Richard LaVigne

By JO-ANN MORIARTY  
Holyoke bureau chief

**HOLYOKE** — The death of Richard LaVigne, radio newsman, commentator and local celebrity, marked the end of an era of a special kind of news reporting at WREB-AM radio, his colleagues said Monday.

LaVigne, known for his across-the-kitchen table style of reporting the news every day from 12:30 to 1 p.m., worked at Holyoke's radio station since 1956.

He was born in Springfield and lived in Agawam for 30 years — but he died at home — in Holyoke Sunday afternoon at Holyoke Hospital. He was 68 years old.

Over the 30 years LaVigne worked at WREB, he became a local celebrity.

When Joe Alfano, owner of WREB, first came to Holyoke 20 years ago from Boston and heard

LaVigne — who everyone simply referred to as "Richard," — present his 30-minute news commentary he was a little taken back by his style.

But Alfano quickly learned that LaVigne "was an integral part of the community."

"Richard was never a business decision. Never. He was going to work here as long as he could," Alfano said.

LaVigne had a stroke on New Year's Day this year and was admitted on and off again at Holyoke Hospital.

He was last admitted in October.

"Everyone is going to tell you about his style. But I'll tell you, he was irreplaceable," Alfano said.

That style meant LaVigne going off on tangents — sometimes endlessly — about observations he had made about a local shop or downtown personality while telling lis-



Everyone is going to tell you about his style. But I'll tell you, he was irreplaceable.

Joe Alfano  
WREB owner



teners about a national news story or an update on the mayoral race.

It seemed like he had all the time in the world.

When a late-breaking story flashed over the Associated Press wires, LaVigne would carry his

telephone over to the machine and rip off the story for the entire audience to hear.

He called a watch a timepiece and at least three times during his 30-minute commentary he would tell listeners, "Well, the WREB news clock says it's..."

Patrolman Arthur J. Therrien, Jr., who is also police union president, commented, "He was almost like clockwork. You could tell by the time, where he was. If you wanted Richard, you could always find him."

From Mayor Ernest E. Proulx to clerks in City Hall, the most common remark about LaVigne was about his integrity and his kindness.

"Richard wouldn't hurt a fly," said Joan LeDuc, who works in the City Clerk's office.

The eyes of Patricia "Patsy" Fletcher, who owns The Colony restaurant on High Street, filled up

with tears when asked about LaVigne.

The Colony was LaVigne's home away from home.

It's where he had breakfast, lunch and supper. Often Mrs. Fletcher would put LaVigne's half-eaten lunch aside while he skipped over to the radio station to do his show.

"He had funny eating habits. He would have five glasses in front of him, juice, water, milk, tea. He was a diabetic and once in a while would cheat and have something sweet," she said.

The mayor said that LaVigne would "bend over backwards to present the news as gently as he could, irrespective of how foolish or bad the politician might have behaved."

"Also, Gisele and I have lost a very dear friend," Proulx said.

LaVigne will be buried Friday in St. Michael's Cemetery fol-



Richard LaVigne

lowing a 10 a.m. funeral at Sacred Heart Church, Agawam.

The Toomey-O'Brien Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. He will be waked Thursday afternoon and evening at the funeral home.