

COUNCILMEN WANT ANSWERS

Firehouse closing reasons demanded

By DIANE RUGG
Home News staff writer

NEW BRUNSWICK — Councilmen Edwin G. Carman and Joseph Vincze say they still don't understand how the city decided to close down the Remsen Avenue firehouse.

Carman said his pleas for a full explanation have apparently fallen on deaf ears. "I still don't have a report. I don't know why, where, or how they (the city administration) has made their decision to close that firehouse."

Vincze agreed, saying he has only received a Dec. 14 memo from city Business Administrator Stanley Marcinczyk citing budgetary reasons — a projected savings of \$80,000.

On Dec. 1, Firehouse No. 4 was closed and its one truck driven to fire headquarters on Joyce Kilmer Avenue. Residents were given only two weeks' notice before the three-man operation was shut down. No firefighting personnel were laid off; two of the men were transferred to headquarters, while a third was reassigned to another fire district in the sixth ward.

Since then, a political action group called the Concerned Area Residents has organized to lobby for adequate protection for the Second Ward. They claim that firetrucks from headquar-

ters, though it's only three-tenths of a mile away, cannot respond as quickly as the Remsen Avenue truck.

Some would even favor a tax hike to ensure fire protection.

Mayor John Lynch said the idea was recommended by Fire Chief Leo Harkins as long as 11 years ago. Harkins defends the consolidation plan, saying firefighters will now be able to respond to a blaze with two engines, a ladder company and deputy chief all arriving at the same time.

Councilman Carman doubts the anticipated savings will be realized, adding that the city — now staffed entirely by paid firemen — seems to be moving toward a combined volunteer-paid department.

Last night, the City Council authorized an emergency appropriation of \$495,707 for police and fire department salaries and wages, due chiefly to an unexpectedly large number of retirements during the year.

In other business, the council voted 5-0 to approve an "adult bookstore ordinance" which will make it hard for businesses to establish here if they are deemed likely to have a "deleterious effect" on the city's revitalization efforts. The supplement to the city's zoning ordinance would make it more difficult for such businesses to concentrate in one area.