

Firehouse reopening uncertain

By RICK DEL VECCHIO
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NEW BRUNSWICK — A reversal of the city's decision to close Firehouse No. 4 on Remsen Avenue cannot be seriously considered until the amount of revenue available for the 1982 municipal budget is known in late February or March, city Business Administrator Stanley Marcinczyk said yesterday.

"Restaffing the firehouse in the next three or four months is not something I can see happening," he said.

Mayor John Lynch said in a meeting with The Home News editorial board Wednesday that he would consider reopening the station in view of community opposition to the Dec. 1 closing.

The firehouse was shut down to save about \$80,000 in overtime pay and

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The No. 4 company's one truck is now housed in a garage on Joyce Kilmer Avenue.

Lynch did not say when the idea of reviving the aging station would be discussed as a business matter.

The mayor is running for re-election this year.

A prominent 2nd Ward advocate, David Harris, reacted cautiously to Lynch's statement. "We have to separate the politics of fire protection from the reality of fire protection," he said yesterday, adding that the budgetary reasons for closing the firehouse still seem compelling.

"The politician in him wants to open it up," Harris said of Lynch. "The business person in him wants to spend that (overtime pay) elsewhere. I support spending it somewhere else."

Marcinczyk said the decision to restaff should be considered as carefully, he said, as the city considered the decision to close the station.

"To make a decision a month later to reopen — one would really have to question why we closed it in the first place," the business administrator said.

The city paid more than \$100,000 in overtime to its 72 firemen in 1981, as well as \$38,000 to compensate regular personnel who served temporarily in positions of authority when ranking firemen were absent.

Budget measures to be acted on by the Legislature this month and next will determine whether state-mandated restrictions on municipal spending will be relaxed. Federal revenue sharing and police and firemen's pensions are sources of income that may be exempted from the restrictions, Marcinczyk said.

The additional spending power could justify reopening the firehouse, he said.

If funding becomes available, the city must decide whether to staff the station with newly hired firemen or to continue paying overtime. Six firemen were based at the Remsen Avenue facility.