



Retiring Wood River Fire Chief said he is leaving the department in "good hands"

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
January 11 2017 1:50 PM



WOOD RIVER - Former **Wood River Fire Chief Steve Alexander** is hanging up his hat after 35 years dedicating to serving the people of Wood River.

"I've been doing this for 35 years altogether," he said. "I joined the department six months after getting out of high school. It's time for me, and I'm confident in the hands the department has been left in."

Those hands belong to the current **Wood River Fire Chief Brendan McKee**. McKee has been working for the **Wood River Fire Department** since 1996 as a shift commander and training officer. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from **Southern Illinois University in Carbondale** with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Fire Service Management. He has also worked as a fire science instructor at **Max Fire Training, LLC** in Godfrey, the **Illinois Fire Service Institute** in Champaign and **Lewis and Clark Community College**. Before coming to Wood River, McKee was a captain at the **Brighton Betsey Ann Fire Protection District**.

"Chief Alexander was a great chief and he did great leading the department," McKee said. "As an instructor, he has been instrumental in training a tremendous amount of firefighters across the area."

After Alexander's last day on Friday, Jan. 6, McKee said he plans on "streamlining" a few administrative duties, but emphasized the department was functioning fine the way it was. He said the department "has good people on the street" now.

As far as Alexander's future, he said he is going to take some time to not to anything.

"I plan on taking a period of time and not really doing anything," he said. "I know I will eventually do something, but right now I will enjoy being off. I have some little projects to work on."

Alexander also instructs at Lewis and Clark Community College, and said he has a fall lineup of classes he is scheduled to teach later in the year. He added the City of Wood River made "a wise choice" with the hiring of McKee to replace him.

"Brendan is a very, very capable and very intelligent man," he said. "As far as integrity, you won't find a better person. He's smart, and I have no concerns. The city made a very, very wise choice with hiring him."

The fire service has changed a lot in Alexander's tenure, and he said he weathered those changes by surrounding himself with some of the best people he could find - including McKee.

"The fire service has changed drastically, especially over the last 10 years or so," he said. "You don't have to be the sharpest tack in the box, you just have to surround yourself with them. I was very fortunate to do that. I surrounded myself with very good and very capable people. Progress is difficult unless you have the people to make that progress. I was blessed to have been able to have those people. I just had to point the ship in the right direction."

