



City of Yakima

# **News Release**

**Subject: Yakima Fire Chief, Deputy Chief to Retire This Month**

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## **Yakima Fire Chief, Deputy Chief to Retire This Month**

Two Yakima firefighters with more than 70 years of combined experience will retire this month.

Yakima Fire Chief Bob Stewart will retire February 28<sup>th</sup> and Deputy Fire Chief Mark Soptich will retire February 16<sup>th</sup>.

"Chief Stewart and Deputy Chief Soptich have had long and distinguished careers in the fire service," said Yakima City Council Public Safety Committee Chair Carmen Méndez. "The City of Yakima is fortunate to have benefitted from their experience and expertise. The City Council, City staff, and the entire Yakima community wish both of them the best in their retirements."

Stewart was named chief in June 2014 after having served as acting chief for six months prior to that. Stewart has spent his entire firefighting career with the Yakima Fire Department. The City hired Stewart, a U.S. Navy veteran, as a firefighter in 1988. During the past 30 years the Salem, Oregon native has been promoted to Yakima Fire Department lieutenant, shift captain, training captain, and deputy chief before being hired for the chief's post four years ago.

Soptich has been a Yakima Fire Department deputy fire chief since May 2012. Prior to that, he was fire chief/director of emergency services for the City of Oak Harbor for 23 years. A Selah High School graduate, Soptich's firefighting career has also included serving as deputy chief of the Selah Fire Department and firefighter/emergency medical technician for the Hanford Fire Department.

"I'd like to honor the service of Chief Stewart and Deputy Chief Soptich," said City Manager Cliff Moore. "They have served with distinction and valor and we wish them the best as they move forward."

With the fire chief and deputy fire chief retiring this month, City administration is evaluating how leadership roles in the Yakima Fire Department will be filled temporarily, as well as what process will be used to fill the fire chief position permanently.