

## Fire Chiefs meeting set- More allegations could be on the agenda

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Elk Park firefighters say the Avery County Fire Commission has overstepped its boundaries once again- this time in the form of what they allege is a criminal action.

While both sides agree the Commission paid a bank money on Elk Park's loan- they disagree on the details.

Assistant fire chief Tim Winters says Fire Department Coordinator Butch Sholar posed as an Elk Park firefighter when paying off the loan at a bank. Winters felt the Commission did not trust him to get the appropriate payment information- and went behind his back.

'They wouldn't take my word for what I was telling the Fire Commission and Butch, and I said, 'Why did this come about, why weren't we notified?' And Daryl said, 'It's paid and that's all that matters,' Winters said.

Commission Chair Daryl Smith did not have a comment for the press yesterday.

According to Winters, Sholar's actions bordered on criminal.

'He represented himself as an Elk Park volunteer fireman... anybody trying to give false information to a bank such as what happened to us, it's federally protected, so it's against federal law to do what Butch and the Fire Commission have done,' Winters said.

At last week's Commission meeting, Smith tried to end the controversy by proposing that from now on, all loan checks will be written to the fire departments, not the loan institutions. That's not good enough for Elk Park Fire Department.

Winters does not blame Sholar- he believes the Commission is responsible. In fact, his department plans to bring their concerns to the top.

Monday at 6 in the Commissioner's Boardroom, Fire Chiefs, the Fire Commission and County Commissioners are meeting to discuss contract controversy. According to Winters- the allegations against Sholar's actions will also be brought to the attention of the County Commission.