



Office of the Mayor

P.O. Box 1089
Athens, AL 35612
Phone (256) 262-1399
Email: hhollman@athensal.us

WILLIAM R. MARKS
Mayor

HOLLY HOLLMAN
Grant Coordinator/Communications Specialist

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Athens names interim chief for Athens Fire and Rescue

James Hand will serve as interim fire chief upon the retirement of Athens Fire and Rescue Chief Bryan Thornton.

Thornton is retiring at the end of this month.

Athens Mayor Ronnie Marks announced today (May 18) that Hand will serve as interim.

Hand is starting his 19th year with the department. He has served as a firefighter, driver, inspector and the past seven years as fire marshal.

"We have a great department, and we want to continue to improve and provide the best services we possibly can," Hand said. "I appreciate the opportunity to serve in the interim position."

Marks said the city plans to open the application process for chief in July. By state law, the Athens City Council makes the decision on who will serve. The Council will have to confirm the position in November since this is a municipal election year. The Council confirms several positions, such as fire chief, the November after a municipal election.