

TUMWATER CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF MEETING

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CONVENE: 5:31 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair Maggie Bean and Commissioners Eric Trimble and Simon Tee.

Staff: Chief Examiner Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, Fire Chief Scott LaVielle, Police Chief Jon Weiks, and Recording Secretary Valerie Gow.

**APPROVAL OF
JANUARY 10, 2019
MINUTES:**

MOTION: **Commissioner Trimble moved, seconded by Commissioner Tee, to approve the minutes of January 10, 2019 as published. Motion carried.**

**STATUS OF
ELIGIBILITY
LISTS:** Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey reviewed the status of all eligibility lists. The list for Police Services Specialist II expired in January 2019. The Commission will review a new exam plan for Entry Level Firefighter. If approved, the active continuous list will move to a time limited list.

**AUTHORIZATION
FOR
EXAMINATION:
ENTRY LEVEL
FIREFIGHTER:** Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey briefed Commissioners on the proposed examination plan for Entry Level Firefighter, which will assist the Department in recruiting efforts to attract, retain, and expand opportunities to the next generation of public safety professionals. The proposed examination helps to eliminate any barriers to employment. The Fire Department established the IDEA Team to assist in identifying potential barriers in hiring practices. The Commission received several briefing on the work by the IDEA Team and some of the barriers that have been identified. Subsequently, a new examination process is proposed to address some of the structural barriers. An overview of the proposed examination process was reviewed by the Commission at the meeting. One major change since that review is the addition of a “speed interview” or a Phase One interview as part of the examination process. The goal of the examination plan is to help create a predictable process for candidates.

After approval, staff proposes to post the examination process in mid-March with a closing date of June 7, 2019. At this time, the Department uses the continuous testing process through Public Safety Testing that measures seven specific elements. A passing score is a minimum of 70%. If the applicant selects Tumwater as an agency of interest, the score of the applicant is forwarded to the City. That process would continue, as well as, the City accepting all candidates who had selected Tumwater from the previous 12 months to the closing date of June 7, 2019.

Chair Bean requested clarification on the minimum score as both 70% and 80% are referenced. Examiner Behrends Cerniwey clarified that candidates with a passing score of 80% or higher would be invited to participate in the

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Phase 1 Speed Interview, which requires a minimum passing score of 70%.

Commissioner Trimble asked whether the assignment of the volunteer points following successful completion of Phase 1 is consistent with current Civil Service rules. Examiner Behrends Cerniwey responded that the assignment of the volunteer points following the Speed Interview is consistent with Civil Service rules.

To avoid confusion, Examiner Behrends Cerniwey suggested changing the acceptance of applicants with a minimum passing score of 80% from Public Safety Testing.

The dates of the screening interview would be posted with the job posting and candidates would need to be available during that week to afford a predictable process. Staff engaged in a process to rate the dimensions for the screening interview. Staff also worked with the City of Bellingham as the agency recently changed its process. Staff incorporated some of Bellingham's lessons learned from its process.

An exercise was conducted with Public Safety Testing, subject matter experts, and with the Fire Chiefs to ensure science was incorporated within the examination by including characteristics that candidates will be rated against. The process involved a review of a standardized job description online that included knowledge, skills, abilities, and tasks for a municipal firefighter. A number of those characteristics were selected and forwarded as a survey to subject matter experts (all Fire Department personnel, external Fire Service contacts, and selected community members). The City received less than 20 completed surveys; however, feedback was consistent. A number of dimensions rose to the top as requirements for an Entry Level Firefighter. The top seven characteristics include:

1. Active listening
2. Compassion/Service Orientation
3. Critical Thinking
4. Oral Comprehension
5. Oral Expression
6. Problem Sensitivity
7. Working Directly with the Public

The team selected three areas for rating during the speed interview. They include:

- Comprehension Skills
- Compassion/Service Orientation
- Working with the Public

The speed interview will consist of three questions with a nine minute limit

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for the applicant. The screening interview will include a panel of two personnel comprised of one firefighter paired with one community member or other fire agency member. Panel members will receive training on panel biases and appropriate scoring of answers. Panel members will rotate as raters. Examples of community members include former fire service employees, former firefighter volunteers, human resource professionals, or current members from another fire agency. Panel members will complete training through Public Safety Testing.

The proposed rating for the questions is based on a scale of 5 to 10 rather than a scale of 1 to 5. Public Safety Testing utilizes a scale of 5 to 10. Within the 1 to 5 scale, 3.5 or above is considered passing. In the 5 to 10 scale, a passing score is 7 or more. Public Safety Testing believes that all participants entering the first phase have passed and the interview results reflect either passing or not passing. A weighting could be added to the scores, which would be reviewed by the Commission, as it would change the scoring system. Volunteer points are applied at the end of the Phase 1 score. Applicants with a passing score of 70% or more would be invited to participate in Phase 2, the Oral Board. Veteran's Preference Points are added to the final score, as required by law. Volunteer points represent one point for every year of service up to five years. The volunteer points would enable a higher ranking for the applicant to advance to the Oral Board.

Commissioner Tee commented that most rating scales are from 1 to 5 with 5 the highest and 1 the lowest. He asked about the rationale for using a rating scale of 5 to 10. Examiner Behrends Cerniwey said the scale speaks more to a starting point at 5 because a passing score is 70%, which would require an applicant to receive a score of 7 on all three dimensions to pass. The threshold for Entry Level Firefighter is basic in terms of age, high school graduate, no criminal record, and no traffic accidents. Many applicants enter the fire service from a number of different pathways. Public Safety Testing recommended using the scale as the same principles are applied and the scale is consistent with Civil Service rules.

Commissioner Trimble added that the three dimensions might or might not be included in the written test. It could be possible for an applicant scoring 100 on the written test not excelling in any of the three dimensions, which is the purpose of the speed interview. The advantage of the rating scale of 5 to 10 is the transparency it provides to panel members.

Fire Chief LaVielle added that other fire departments have used the scale and have been very successful with the results.

Commissioner Tee cited several hypothetical situations that might produce candidates with identical scores. Examiner Behrends Cerniwey remarked that the proposal seeks more information on each dimension and in all practicality,

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candidates tend to have clusters of different skills.

Commissioner Trimble asked whether the raters would have the option of assessing a fractional score. Examiner Behrends Cerniwey affirmed fractional scores would be allowed with both raters required to reach a consensus on the score of the applicant.

Fire Chief LaVielle reported that the team met with a fire district that is utilizing the same process. Personnel from a fire district in King County reviewed the entire process with staff and shared how successful the process has been for the agency. Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey also contacted the City of Bellingham and reviewed the process, which has also adopted the same process. Information from both agencies was similar. Both agencies confirmed how successful the new process has been and how it has enabled the agency to attract good candidates.

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey reported the candidates with the top scores from the first phase would proceed to Phase 2, the Oral Board. The Oral Board is a longer interview affording more time for applicants to respond to questions.

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey explained how the proposed process provides an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their abilities rather than a process that attracts only candidates that test well. The intent is to increase diversity within the applicant pool.

Commissioner Tee shared that he is having some difficulty in understanding the rationale for a change in the rating scale. Chair Bean pointed out that if all applicants are rated on the same scale, an applicant's score will be reflected on the rating scale regardless of the type of rating scale used. In this particular instance, the proposed rating scale represents an accurate method to evaluate the characteristics of a desired applicant because the process is not about whether the applicant has the skills to be a firefighter, but it is the characteristics of the person that are being rated.

Discussion ensued between the Commission and staff on the benefits of the proposed examination plan. Staff acknowledged the difference in the proposed examination and why staff consulted with Public Safety Testing, which provided some assistance and expertise. Chair Bean added that the Commission also has the option of receiving an update after implementation of the new process to learn what worked or did not work.

MOTION:

Commissioner Trimble moved, seconded by Commissioner Tee, to approve and authorize the proposed examination plan for Entry Level Firefighter as presented with the Commission receiving an update on the results within the next year. Motion carried unanimously.

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EXAMINATION
UPDATE: POLICE
SERVICES
SPECIALIST 1:

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey reported the Commission previously approved the examination plan for the Police Services Specialist 1 position at the January 2019 meeting. The position is an administrative function within the Police Department handling records, administrative duties, and/or evidence. The new position was added as part of the department's reorganization. A list was established and approved by the Commission. A current employee was hired from the list and reclassified to the new position. The City posted another position on January 18, 2019. The posting closed on February 17, 2019. The City received 76 applications. The examination includes a self-rating component. However, the results revealed some difference in the applicant's history of experience and the self-rating. An administrative decision resulted in the City asking all candidates to provide clarification on their respective self-rating score, specifically, the office/clerical element of the job. Elements from the job description were used to develop a list of tasks to provide more definition to the applicants on experience factors for clerical/office. Each candidate was asked to re-rate the self-rating component of the examination. Twenty-nine of the 39 candidates returned the new self-rating results with 21 applicants passing with a score of 70% or above.

Oral Boards have been scheduled with the top 15 applicants on Wednesday, March 6, 2019. Three applicants withdrew from the process for various reasons.

Commissioner Trimble asked whether the City sent a notice to the candidates who did not respond. Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey affirmed the City notified those applicants that they were dropped from the list because they did not respond to the request. The candidates were afforded approximately four days to respond to the request (Thursday through Monday).

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey explained that the request was within the realm of the examination plan as it only added clarification to the definition of the question. However, it did add an extra step for applicants. Only two of the applicants with a score of 70% or above were not invited to the Oral Board. However, those applicants could be invited if some of the other applicants do not respond to the invitation.

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey addressed questions about the lack of including the extra step within the examination plan. The examination plan did not include any information about the process, as it was an unusual situation because the position is new to the Police Department. The process provided a learning opportunity for the City.

Police Chief Weiks added that several of the candidates' self-scores did not match to information contained within the application. The request was

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simply a clarification for the applicant to bridge the gap. Additionally, the request was sent to all applicants.

Commissioner Trimble noted the City has also pursued a similar process with several lateral Police applications in the past.

**UPDATES AND
SCHEDULING:**

Fire Chief LaVielle reported on the anticipated arrival of the new fire engine within the next several weeks. The new engine is similar in size to the department's other fire engine. The new fire engine will be assigned to Station T-2. A fire engine push-back ceremony is planned.

One new Firefighter is anticipated to graduate from the Fire Academy in four weeks. The department recently received notification of an impending retirement of a firefighter who served the department for 37 years.

Police Chief Weiks reported on an officer's pending completion of phase two of the Field Training Program. The officer will complete the final phase and will begin patrol duties in mid-April.

The department hired another police officer on February 4, 2019 as a lateral from the Liquor Control Board. The officer is scheduled to begin field training next week.

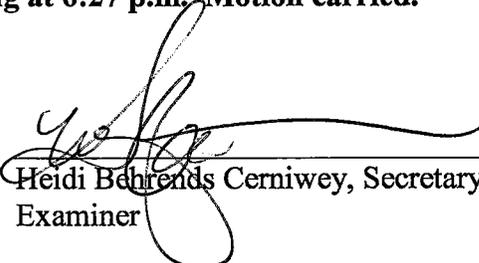
Another officer is scheduled to graduate from the police academy next week. Two other officers are attending the academy. The department is currently undertaking a background review on another lateral candidate from the Liquor Control Board. The department was recently notified of the resignation of another officer who has accepted a position with the Puyallup Police Department.

Chief Examiner Behrends Cerniwey reported the next meeting is scheduled on March 14, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Trimble moved, seconded by Commissioner Tee, to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m. Motion carried.



Maggie Bean, Chair



Heidi Behrends Cerniwey, Secretary/Chief
Examiner