

## Chehalis Civil Service Commission

Minutes of September 28, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph Mano, Ed Stanton, Sheila Johnson-Teeter

OTHERS PRESENT: Chief Hendershot, Deputy Chief McKnight, Kevin Reynolds, Jill Anderson

Meeting was called to order by Chairman at 7 PM. Minutes of July 27, 2022 were approved as published with one correction from the Secretary. Mr. Mc Grath on the Police Lateral list had his name spelled incorrectly.

### Old Business:

The Secretary presented updated eligibility lists for the Fire Department and the Police Department to the Commission.

Deputy Chief McKnight informed the Commission that McGrath has been offered a position as well as Purkey.

New Business: none

### Rules and Regulations

Firefighter Reynolds stated that a proposal for changing the testing for firefighter has been presented to the Commission, and the city plans to present its perspective tonight.

City Manager Jill Anderson had a power point that she printed out for all to review as she presented. Her proposal was twelve pages in length, but her suggestion is that the current method of testing with a national agency remain in place.

Mr. Mano asked specifically why our department could not conduct the tests here by perhaps buying equipment for testing. He asked if that would provide consistency.

There was much discussion about the cost of the national program and its effectiveness. Differences for the candidate might include expenses, and they could vary from candidate to candidate depending on the wishes of the candidate to be included in multiple agency lists.

A lengthy discussion about CPAT testing included places where the testing can take place. At present Tukwila and Spokane are the available places, and a question arose about availability to more candidates. Online testing makes part of the program easier for some candidates.

If Chehalis were to offer local testing, it would need to purchase equipment at a fairly steep cost, or it could contract with an outside agency like Thurston County. At present, Chief Hendershot pointed out, Chehalis does not have equipment or a building adequate for the task.

City Manager Anderson pointed to page 4 of her proposal about costs and added that the local testing might subject the city to potential liability. She stated that even if the local testing was impartial, sometimes an inaccurate perception of partiality exists.

Overall, City Manager Anderson proposed to stay with PST, keep the test impartial, add improvements as needed, of course, and promote more local candidates through social media and the city's website.

Mr. Stanton stated that his views as a Commissioner have never changed – he wants to make sure that the tests are equitable, that evaluators are from outside Lewis County, and that local friendships do not play into any decisions. He agreed with the need to publicize more and perhaps consider recruiting from volunteer or reserve groups.

Mr. Mano asked what benefits are obtained from a national testing agency or even considering another national testing group. Chief Hendershot replied that candidates from farther distances from Chehalis are able to access the tests. The tests are online and do not require travel.

The discussion moved to IAFF safety standards. Mr. Mano asked about standardized products for testing at firefighter events. City Manager Anderson said that PST and other testing agencies were all certified, and that some cities require PST testing.

Chief Hendershot also informed the Commission that in some cities, the eligibility list candidates need a score at 98-99 level to be considered. He stated that the scores on Chehalis eligibility lists run at about 94.

Mr. Stanton asked about using some other testing group than PST. Chief Hendershot replied that 66 communities use PST now. He said he would look at other testing groups to see if he could find any closer to Chehalis.

City Manager Anderson commented that her recommendation is to stay with PST and work with the firefighter contract to accept a physical eligibility part of other agencies, if they meet Chehalis standards. That way the candidate pool would not be as limited.

Firefighter Reynolds responded to the City Manager's proposal. Their proposal is to bring the test back to the local Commission and conduct our own physical test for reserve and regular. He stated that the events for the local test are not that different from real working conditions. He listed dummy drop, ladder work, sledge hammer action and such. He asked about certification, stating he thinks that the local tests are certified and almost the same in nature with PST tests. In past local testing, no one has been hurt, and no challenges have ever been made. The local physical testing is well planned, tested and timed. All the candidates were able to visit the testing site, review the challenges and practice with help and guidance from the firefighters on duty.

Mr. Mano asked what part of the \$12, 000 expense for equipment would the local department need. Mr. Reynolds replied that the local department has all necessary equipment. He added that to practice at a CPAT facility costs \$43.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the cost of PST is annual whether it produces any candidates or not. The local testing produces a list that can be valid for at least a year, and in the past, the list was kept viable for longer. Currently, once a list is produced, at the local level, interviews for candidates have not been conducted in a consistent manner.

In closing, Mr. Reynolds stated that liability does not absolve the city of its responsibility to provide good candidates. No system is perfect, but he believes that the lists should reflect community interest and involvement. The current system does not accomplish those goals.

Mr. Mano suggested we at least explore adding another facility for the physical testing. Mr. Reynolds agreed that was a step in the right direction. We need to encourage local candidates, reflect the community and improve the hiring system.

Mr. Reynolds added one last note that the current testing service does not inform the local department if a candidate has accepted a job elsewhere, so once a candidate is contacted, on the list, he is unavailable. The last fire department hire took six months, and overtime was used to fill vacant positions.

Mr. Mano and Mr. Stanton commented that a decision would be tabled until the next meeting.

In other business, Mr. Mano suggested that if a candidate is to be removed from a list, the information about the candidate would be forwarded to the Secretary. She would then send out a form letter to the candidate informing him/her of the request for removal and the process of appeal and the date for that appeal. The candidate would be given 10 days to respond. If the candidate asks for an appeal, the Secretary would set up a hearing date.

The general meeting was adjourned at 8:20 into Executive Session to discuss personnel.

The general meeting was reopened at 8:24. Motion to remove Bryson Crisp from the Police Entry Level Eligibility List passed. Johnson-Teeter/Stanton

For the Good of the Order: next meeting will be Tuesday, October 25, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25

Joseph Mano  
Chairman

Janelle Williams  
Secretary