

Meeting of the Civil Service Board

**Present:** Chair Ron Chapman, Jr., Vice-Chair Marvin M. Lane, Jr., George L. Allen, Jr., Juan C. Hernandez, F. Ray Hill, Pat Parrish

**Absent:** Alicia S. Voltmer

**Attendees:**

Jason McClain, Assistant City Attorney  
Janice S. Moss, Senior Assistant City Attorney  
Daniel Salazar, Deputy Chief, Dallas Fire Department  
Steve Sanderfer, Former Civil Service Board Vice-Chair

**Civil Service Department Staff:**

Michelle Hanchard, Assistant Director  
Sheneice Hughes, Supervisor IV  
Patricia Marsolais, Secretary to the Civil Service Board  
Pamela McDonald, Manager – Examining and Recruitment Division  
Martha Santos, Executive Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

The Chair welcomed Juan Hernandez to the Board. Mr. Hernandez, an attorney, described a little about himself and the civil litigation work his law firm does. He said he is proud of the work the firm does to look out for the rights and interests of the “little guy” for the most part.

The Chair recognized former Vice-Chair, Steve Sanderfer for his service to the Board by reading and presenting him with a proclamation acknowledging his time and contributions made to the City.

Mr. Sanderfer said that he enjoyed his time on the Board and was honored to have served with all his fellow members. Although the decisions the Board made were not always popular, doing the right thing was always the objective. He indicated his deep appreciation for those who served with him.

A similar resolution was prepared for former Board Member Joseph Phifer. Mr. Phifer was unable to attend the meeting. The proclamation will be sent to him.

The minutes of the Thursday, September 4, 2008 regular meeting were unanimously approved.

The Chair raised the subject of Board membership, in particular, the openings on the Adjunct Panel. With two recent resignations there are eight vacancies on the panel of fifteen. Due to the majority of current appellants requesting an Administrative Law Judge rather than a Trial Board to hear their cases, the Chair does not feel the vacancies on the Adjunct Panel constitute a critical problem at this point. He does encourage fellow Board members to contact any Council members they have a positive relationship with and encourage them to look into filling the vacancies.

The Board unanimously approved the department’s records retention schedule.

The Secretary gave the Board an overview of the process that resulted in a set of Board recommended areas for development, study, and action concerning the uniform assessment process. The categories for consideration and work were an outgrowth of Mr. Lane’s discussions with employee associations and management about areas of concern to them. The Secretary noted that much progress had been made in implementing and completing items on the list provided to the Board. She thanked the City Attorney’s Office for their review and comments on outstanding projects such as the uniform promotional information booklet. It is hoped that the changes suggested to the uniform promotional information booklet and assessment center survey will be ready to present to the Board at the next meeting.

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At the Chair's request the Secretary and Assistant Director described the uniform promotional testing process and how the assessment center component works. In addition, questions about how assessors are chosen and how many assessors are needed were asked and answered by staff. Action items on the list of Board recommended tasks were discussed in depth.

As a point of guidance on the announcement of the dates for an assessment center, Mr. Chapman asked the staff to strive to give the 90 days advance notice so that fewer accommodations would have to be made or alternative dates scheduled. Mr. Hernandez asked about steps to ensure diversity on the assessment panels. Ms. Marsolais and Ms. Hanchard described the process that is used. The current approach has been reviewed with City Counsel. Senior Assistant City Attorney Janice Moss also gave a lengthy overview of litigation that impacts the manner in which the City can diversify its ranks. One ruling, in part, was very good for the City in that it allowed the City to undertake strong recruiting efforts. For example, going out to historically minority colleges, recreation centers, cultural centers and to the minority community to recruit at the initial level. The Police and Fire Departments have done a much better job doing that and implementing the process.

Ms. Moss provided a legal update on the process the City went through with the Attorney General's Office about the release of tests and other documents. Ms. Parrish asked staff to clarify the recruiting process for assessors so as to better understand the efforts made to have a diverse group of assessors. Ms. Hanchard described the process used to obtain assessors from cities comparable to Dallas. Assessors who have previously participated in one of our testing process are given first opportunity to come back. Ms. Hanchard explained that there has been some difficulty in recruiting Hispanic assessors. Through cooperation with the Latino Peace Officers Association and the Hispanic Firefighters Association word has gone out to national organizations for assistance. This has worked well and has helped diversify the pool of assessors. In response to a question from Mr. Lane, Ms. Hanchard estimates that 90 to 95 percent of assessors come back to participate again.

The Chair questioned how the grievance process outlined in the Personnel Rules works with an assessment center challenge. An individual can grieve ten working days from the date they know of the harm. Ms. Moss said she would have to look at individual cases because sometimes the ten working days start at a different point depending on what the employee is grieving. Mr. Chapman just wants to be sure that we are being consistent.

In response to Mr. Chapman's question about the development of specific policies with Police and Fire as to how often examinations are given, Ms. Hanchard explained that it is typically every two years, although it is up to the department to let us know when they have a vacancy or want a test. After discussion with the Board, staff, and the Senior Assistant City Attorney, the Chair asked the staff to reevaluate the status of the Board's original directive on this and get back to it with a draft policy or suggested modification.

Ms. Hanchard outlined the process staff goes through to review the mechanics and staffing of an assessment center after it has taken place in order to make any needed changes. It is an ongoing process. Ms. Hanchard described this review as both a formal and global perspective. Staff meetings are held after each assessment to debrief the event and to identify what can be done to improve it. Mr. Chapman feels that an update for the Board once a year on this would be sufficient.

In relation to the item on developing a procedure for inviting good assessors back, Mr. Chapman asked how assessors are being evaluated. The consultant overseeing the process observes the assessors and reports any issues, concerns, or complaints. Staff is also monitoring their performance at the same time. There is also a process in place to ensure that an assessor's grading is in sync with the fellow assessor in the test room. The panels are comprised of two assessors.

The Secretary updated the Board on the uniform test schedule. The tests scheduled include Police Senior Corporal early in December and the Fire and Rescue series during the first half of 2009. The Assistant Director responded to a question from the Chair about the status of validating the examination for Senior Corporal. It is an update of an existing validation study that is being conducted by Civil Service staff.

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The Secretary identified Dr. George Thornton of Colorado State University as the consultant for the next round of assessment centers.

After study and a survey conducted of cities comparable to Dallas, the staff does not recommend videotaping or audio taping assessment centers. Information was submitted on the high cost of videotaping assessment centers. Some cities that responded to the inquiry use videotaping as a training tool or as a way for the assessors to grade the candidate. Very few are doing it as a check and balance on the process. The Chair asked if the complaints are so far in number percentage-wise that the topic would be worth reevaluating. He asked staff to get that number to the Board in the future so it could make an informed decision.

After being joined by Assistant City Attorney Jason McClain, Ms. Moss clarified an earlier point on the grievance process and assessment centers. Typically what happens is a candidate submits an open records request after they have received his or her individual score asking for his or her test materials and everybody else's test scores. If after reviewing this material the candidate believes he or she has been harmed by the process and all the elements of a grievance have been met, a grievance can be filed within ten working days from the date of the occurrence that caused the grievance, or from the date the employee first had knowledge of the occurrence.

The Secretary briefed the Board on the final results of the fiscal year 2008-09 budget process. Although the bottom line increased and negotiations with the City Manager resulted in the retention of the NEOGOV Process Review Manager for another year, the department did lose funding for a vacant position in the process. The Chair asked the Secretary to alert the Board if budgetary problems arise.

The Secretary announced the initiation of a monthly program to help employees learn more about the NEOGOV Workforce Management System in January 2009. The program will be based on the successful presentation Civil Service staff made to the Black Employees Support Team entitled "Navigating through the NEOGOV System" The new program will be publicized to employees through an all points bulletin.

The Board entered into closed executive session at 9:46 a.m. pursuant to Section 551.074 of the Texas Open Meetings Act to conduct the annual evaluation of the Secretary to the Board. The executive session ended at 10:13 a.m. There were no votes taken.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

**(A complete transcription of this meeting is available)**

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**ATTESTED**

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**APPROVED**