

Meeting of the Civil Service Board

Present: Vice-Chair Pat Parrish, F. Ray Hill, Marvin M. Lane, Jr.

Attendees:

Patsy Palmer Bethea, Interim Assistant Director, Human Resources  
Jason McClain, Assistant City Attorney  
Janice Moss, Assistant City Attorney  
Joe Pierce, Deputy Fire Chief  
Noel Santos, Jr., Observer  
Vanessa Santos, Observer  
Tom Taylor, Grievance Chair, Dallas Firefighters Association  
Margaret Wright, Interim Director, Human Resources

Civil Service Department Staff:

Brenda Curry, Employment Center Manager  
Michelle Hanchard, Assistant Director  
Sylvia Littleton, Executive Assistant  
Patricia Marsolais, Secretary to the Civil Service Board  
Martha Santos, Management Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m.

The Board unanimously approved the minutes of the December 6, 2004 regular meeting.

The subject of classification subsets to evaluate employment applications was introduced by the Secretary. The issue was raised by one of the Civil Service Department's Senior Human Resource Analysts after a discussion with a Human Resources Department (HR) classification and compensation employee. The Civil Service employee was under the impression that HR was doing away with classification subsets in 2005. Because subsets are used as a critical screening mechanism to differentiate between jobs under broad headings such as "Manager", resolution of this issue was important. Interim Director of Human Resources, Margaret Wright, confirmed that this was a conversation taken out of context. Subsets will be retained.

Deputy Fire Prevention Chief Joe Pierce, Chair of the Civil Service/Human Resources Efficiency Taskforce Performance Management Subcommittee, provided the Board with an overview of the subcommittee's recommendations. Chief Pierce confirmed that he had forwarded the recommendations on to the full taskforce and had received no suggested changes back. The subcommittee's recommendations were:

1. Require all executives, managers, and supervisors to complete the extensive "Coaching for Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness" training within the next 24 months. This existing training curriculum covers the areas of leadership/accountability, coaching, communication and customer service.
2. Document the receipt of a hard copy of the City's October 2002 Personnel Rules and the four Administrative Directives regarding Workplace Violence, Sexual Harassment, Drugs & Alcohol, and Internet usage by all City employees.
3. The Human Resources Department in conjunction with the City Attorney's Office should produce and present a video-taped review of the City's "Rules of Conduct" with a follow-up Question and Answer period for all City employees (English & Spanish versions).
4. Streamline and clarify independent non-executive hearing process.

Board members commended the subcommittee for its fine work and questioned what the next step would be. Mr. Lane, also a member of the Taskforce, expressed concern that Ted Benavides' retirement signaled the end of these initiatives and that no further action would be taken. Margaret Wright indicated that Assistant City Manager Charles Daniels had advised her that a briefing related to Taskforce matters would be made to the City Council on February 2. She said she would have additional information on this after she meets with Acting City Manager Mary Suhm later in the week. Mr. Lane asked if the issues would be briefed first to "Small Group" [Acting City Manager, Assistant City Managers] before City Council. Margaret Wright said she was unsure.

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Mr. Lane asked the Secretary to advise him by close of business on Thursday if and what the next steps would be. He expressed concern that the fine work, recommendations, and strong data that emerged to dispel the impression that employees cannot be terminated will get lost in the shuffle. Board members agreed that this message must be communicated to the City Manager's staff and City Council members.

Vice-Chair Parrish suggested that more detail on the Performance Management Subcommittee's recommendations, be included in the Annual Report to the Mayor and City Council particularly since there is the inaccurate perception that Civil Service puts a large number of terminated employees back to work. The Secretary will e-mail changes to Board members. The Board unanimously approved the report with the requested changes made as discussed.

The Board went into closed executive session from 8:46 a.m. to 8:54 a.m. pursuant to Section 551.071 of the Texas Open Meetings Act to allow the City Attorney's Office to brief the Board on legal issues concerning the litigation, Teresa Ward Cooper v. City of Dallas, cause no., 3-04-CV-2407-H, filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas.

Under department news, Employment Center Manager Brenda Curry gave the Board an overview of the department's applicant tracking system history and present situation. Executive Assistant Sylvia Littleton explained that for the past ten years the service contract with Unified Data Systems, Inc. has been approved as an administrative action contract by the City Attorney's Office. The department has been advised that the service contract with this company, a sole source vendor due to its ownership of the programming source code, must be approved by the City Council. Vice-Chair Parrish suggested that staff meet with the City Attorney's Office to see if there is a way to pay the current vendor. She also recommended advising the current vendor that there may be a hold on payments and/or further evaluation of the services provided.

Assistant Director Michelle Hanchard gave the Board a report on the projected uniformed testing schedule for 2005. She also advised the Board that a vendor recommendation to validate and update the current Fire and Rescue physical abilities test is slated for January 12, 2005 City Council approval.

Members expressed their concerns about the two vacancies on the Board and the difficulty it poses in conducting business. Each member indicated that they had conveyed this situation to their Councilmember. Vice-Chair Parrish asked Assistant City Attorney Janice Moss to talk with the City Attorney about this. Ms. Parrish will also send a letter to the Mayor.

The Vice-Chair asked the Secretary to place her annual evaluation on the February agenda. The Secretary acknowledged her plan to do so.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

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APPROVED

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