

Meeting of the Civil Service Board

Present: Vice-Chair Pat Parrish, F. Ray Hill, Marvin M. Lane, Jr., James M. Meyer
Absent: Steve Sanderfer

Attendees:

George Aranda, President, Latino Peace Officers Association (LPOA)
Shawn Gary, President, Black Fire Fighters Association (BFFA)
Billy Ingram, Past President, Black Fire Fighters Association (BFFA)
Richard Rios, Rehire Applicant
Tom Taylor, Grievance Chair, Dallas Fire Fighters Association

Civil Service Department Staff:

Jamie Culp, Senior Human Resources Analyst
Michelle Hanchard, Assistant Director
Sheneice Hughes, Coordinator of Test Development and Validation
Sylvia Littleton, Executive Assistant
Kim Martin, Senior Human Resources Analyst
Patricia Marsolais, Secretary to the Civil Service Board

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m.

Vice-Chair Parrish welcomed new Board member James "Mike" Meyer to the Board. Mr. Meyer says he is a real estate investor. He looks forward to contributing to the Board.

The minutes of the December 9, 2005 regular meeting were unanimously approved.

The Board heard the rehire appeal of former Park Department employee Richard Rios. After much discussion with Mr. Rios about his previous employment with the City and consideration of the material that had been provided by him and the City, the Board voted unanimously to approve his request to reapply for jobs with the City.

Vice-Chair Parrish opened up the discussion on the Special Civil Service Committee Report and Recommendations to be presented by Board member Marvin Lane by saying that the project was a full Board initiative. She thanked Mr. Lane for all of the hard work he has done as Chair of the project.

In presenting his report, Mr. Lane reiterated that the endeavor was a Board initiative and not a Civil Service staff project. He indicated that he did meet with staff twice for education on what the promotional process was. The Special Committee was created by the Board on September 12, 2005 to understand the concerns expressed by several employee associations that there appeared to be no checks and balances in the promotional process.

In conducting the project Mr. Lane met with ten different employee associations, the City Attorney's Office, Police Chief Kunkle, Assistant Police Chief Brown, and Acting Fire Chief Bright to seek their thoughts and ideas.

He has briefed each member of the Board on his findings. Additionally, he talked by telephone with Dr. George Thornton of Colorado State, who is consultant to the City on the assessment process. All participants were invited to hear the preliminary

recommendations on December 8, 2005 and to provide feedback and input on any of the suggestions.

The recommendations are broken down into the following three categories:

- a. Board Approval of the Concept
- b. Staff Review and Take Action
- c. Areas for Study.

Recommendations for Board Approval

1. Notice for promotional testing be given 90 days prior to the written examination and the dates of the assessment center announced 90 days prior to the assessment center and at least by the date of the written examination.
2. Staff prepare a booklet explaining all of the details of the promotional process. It is very clear that there is a great deal of misunderstanding about the process and how the tests are prepared and reviewed. It is critical that uniform personnel understand what the process is. There is also a lot of mistrust within the uniform services of uniform services management.
3. In the explanation of the written examination appeal process, it should be noted that any candidate who has a concern has the right to come forth and talk to the Civil Service Board.
4. Staff work with employee associations on the development of a specific assessment center appeal process limiting appeals to major process discrepancies, fraud, and/or discrimination.
5. Provide a feedback questionnaire to each assessment center participant within ten days after completing the assessment process. Twice a year Civil Service staff shall present a summary of the responses to the Board.
6. Development of a specific policy with Police and Fire management as to how often examinations will be held.

In the category of **Staff Review and Take Action**, the staff is requested to study the following issues and take appropriate action: (Board approval is not required):

1. Look into the number of textbooks and the amount of material required to prepare for an examination.
2. Determine what is needed to ensure that study material and textbooks are widely available to candidates.
3. Review the mechanics and staffing of assessment centers and make any changes that would facilitate the process.
4. Develop a procedure for inviting "good assessors" back for future tests.

In the **Staff Study** category it is requested that Civil Service staff study the use of audio and videotaping of assessment centers and the possibility of assessors providing candidates with feedback on one or two of their strengths and weaknesses. Although these are not recommendations for Board approval, they are pertinent areas for review.

Project Chair Marvin Lane said that he had received no feedback from the employee associations or others who attended the briefing on December 9, 2005. In addition, City Manager Mary Suhm included a copy of the Committee's report for all City Council members in her December 13, 2005 reply to Councilmember James Fantroy about the cost of a consultant to evaluate the employment practices of both the Human Resources and Civil Service Departments. There has been no feedback or questions from Councilmembers to date.

In conclusion, Mr. Lane said it is his opinion that there are adequate checks and balances in the current promotional process. They will only be strengthened with the Board adoption of the recommendations. He added that if testing were transferred to the Human Resources Department as suggested by the City Manager and some others, it is his opinion that the checks and balances in the process would be decreased. For example, the testers, Human Resources, the candidates, and police and fire personnel, would all report to the City Manager. In the methodology that is used today, the testers are in the Civil Service Department who report to the Civil Service Board. The Civil Service Board reports to the City Council, thus, a stronger check and balance than would exist if there is change.

Billy Ingram, past President of the Dallas Black Fire Fighter's Association asked the Board for some clarification on a proposed appeal of an assessment center process by a candidate. He added that they are totally against the appeal system for assessment centers. Mr. Ingram read the following into the record about assessment centers:

The assessment center method was originally developed to overcome weaknesses found in more traditional methods such as written tests and interviews. Research has shown that the assessment centers had proven to be better predictors of supervisors' and managers' success than any other process.

Assessment centers are much better tools than written tests or interviews for the measurement of such criteria as leadership, decision making, interpersonal skills and common sense.

Mr. Ingram asked the Board how a candidate can appeal someone's assessment of him or her? Vice-Chair Parrish responded that the matter of an appeal including what can or cannot be appealed is a concept to be hammered out by the Civil Service staff and members of the employee associations.

There are issues the Board cannot hear in the grievance appeal system already in place under the Personnel Rules. An appeal process for the assessment process will be similarly defined.

Mr. Ingram is concerned that an appeal process will be added when there is already one in place. He added that anyone who falls down in the assessment process, including members of the Black Fire Fighter's Association (BFFA), will appeal the examination. He believes the appeals will be endless. Mr. Lane assured him that representatives of the BFFA will participate in the writing of the appeal process and if there is disagreement when that project is complete, the association is welcome to come back to the Board with a minority report of what the association thinks it should be.

Vice-Chair Parrish encourages everyone who has thoughts or concerns on the recommendations to forward them to her or another member of the Board. The Board will be prepared to take action on the recommendations at the February meeting.

George Aranda, President of the Latino Peace Officer's Association raised a question about who determines the diversity of the assessors. Since this is a staff undertaking, it was suggested that Mr. Aranda talk with Assistant Director Michelle Hanchard about that process.

Tom Taylor Grievance Chair of the Dallas Fire Fighter's Association (DFFA) stated that their concern is that the current grievance process is not appropriate for an assessment appeal since it can take a long time to be heard. He added that if there is an appeal process and it is found that there was fraud, a major discrepancy, or discrimination then the assessment center process would be strengthened. He said that they are strong proponents that Civil Service is the proper venue for resolution of these issues.

In department news, Assistant Director Michelle Hanchard updated the Board on the status of uniform testing projects. She said that obtaining a price agreement with a hotel for space to do this is still a problem. Mr. Lane asked the Secretary to draft a message to the City Manager explaining this problem and how it is a detriment to the morale of uniform services. It is not fair to the candidates that they do not know when the assessment centers are going to be held. He also suggested that a request be made that the City Manager assemble a task force of three people to come up with alternatives to the use of hotels for assessment centers.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.