

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, February 26, 2024

5:00 PM

Present: Marilyn Sessions, Chair
Chris Klein, Member
Matthew Hathaway, Member

Also Present: John Seidel, CSC Coordinator
Michael Lewis, Police Lieutenant
James Samels, Fire Chief
Dominique Bollenbacher, Community Engagement Coordinator

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Civil Service Commission was called to order at 5:00 pm on Monday, February 26, 2024, by Marilyn Sessions. Roll call was taken.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES of January 29, 2024, made by Ms. Klein, seconded by Mr. Hathaway, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 3-0.

Lieutenant Lewis introduced the idea for external promotionals by saying that, "Looking forward into the future, the next time we need a new chief, I would like to look at outside candidates in addition to internal candidates for that assessment process." He continued, "A number of Police Departments around us in this area have opened up their searches to outside Chiefs of Police and I think it would go a long way to broaden our search and find the best candidate."

Ms. Klein asked, "What is the reasoning for not looking at external candidates?" Lt. Lewis replied, "That's just the way things have always been."

Lt. Lewis said, "Unfortunately, in our agency we only ever have two eligible candidates to take the chief promotional. It has to be competitive, but with only two captains, if one of the captains didn't meet the criteria, then it would open up to all lieutenants, but we are seeing a reduction in people looking for promotions within our department. Having two people to choose from doesn't seem like it best serves the department or city."

Ms. Klein asked, "What is the requirement, would they have to be a captain in another city?" Lt. Lewis answered, "Because of the structure in different agencies, for example some agencies go from sergeant to chief, a candidate would not have to be a captain in another agency."

Mr. Seidel asked, "Would we require them to be the closest rank to chief?" Lt. Lewis replied, "So, the criteria would be another discussion. I have reached out to the City of Tallmadge, which is similar to Kent, just to see their language, and search criteria."

Ms. Klein asked, "Where is the discussion about criteria going to take place?" Mr. Seidel responded, "I talked with Hope, and this would be the same as the lateral transfer process. We would have to vote in specific language and then go to City Council to officially add to our rules."

Ms. Sessions said, "I'd like to clarify that we have good employees here, there is nothing wrong with who we have. This is just to broaden our candidate pool." She then asked, "Would there be a union issue at

all? Lt. Lewis replied, "The captain position is non-union. Any candidates in the chief process would be non-union."

Ms. Klein asked, "Is Fire the same?" Chief Samels responded, "Firefighters and lieutenants are all in the collective bargaining agreement, our captains and above are not." He then added, "I'm in agreement with a lot of what Lieutenant Lewis says, our departments are structured very similarly. In my experience with departments around us, I've seen this work, I've seen it not work. We could also say there's been internal candidates that haven't worked. Everything is individual to that scenario. An example where this would work, is if you bring someone in and there are issues and problems, someone who doesn't get tied up in the day-to-day culture, and they don't get tied up and can bring in a fresh set of ideas and spring the department in the right direction." He continued, "One thing I wonder about is a Civil Service position vs. an appointed position. Because I know that some other communities will select, and basically through the interview process, will say you're the new chief. There's not even a test. Where we take a test right now, so I don't know how the outside chief would fit in, is it still a tested setup? Does it have to be done for both Police and Fire? I'm in agreement with Lt. Lewis. When I took the lieutenants test seven people took the test, when I took the captain test two people took the test, and when I took the chief test two people took the test. That's the way the mountain is set up, I don't think that will ever change unless our department grows. I am a little torn in this situation because I'm a bit of a traditionalist. I really place a lot of value on the culture and traditions of an organization. It doesn't mean they're lost by hiring someone outside."

Ms. Klein asked, "You have a point, do you want that?"

Chief Samels replied, "Just speaking on behalf of me, but I feel like it's worked well for us. I am a realist also; I understand we don't have six or seven captains wanting to take that test."

Lieutenant Lewis said, "Just to clarify, I am only asking for Police, and right now the position of chief."

Ms. Klein said, "Right, we might need to check with Hope to see if we can do just one position. By the way, do you have a feel for what people are thinking? Have you asked current captains what they think about this? Since now we're making it harder for them to get promoted."

Lt. Lewis replied, "One of our captains is going to be retiring soon. He did take the chief exam with Chief Shearer. If there was another opening, would he consider sticking around? I don't know. How the other captain feels? I don't know. I haven't had a discussion with her about it. I do know that we've announced a promotional exam for captain, and we barely have two candidates at this point, even though we have five lieutenants. So, maybe there is some reason to open up promotional positions to the outside for other positions aside from chief. I don't know. Sometimes it's situational."

Ms. Sessions asked, "Could we start with the chief position, then at a later date open it up to other positions?" Lt. Lewis commented, "I think that'd be a good start."

Ms. Klein asked, "What about the reverse? You have a need for captain within the next few months, where as you don't for chief." Lt. Lewis replied, "The research I have done is only into chief, I would not be opposed to opening it up to other positions as well."

Mr. Seidel added, "We do have a captain exam scheduled in April, I'm not sure that we could get this done in time."

Mr. Hathaway asked Chief Samels, "Do you think the culture is more with Fire instead of Police because of spending more time together?" Chief replied, "That's a great observation. There's probably a lot of

truth to that. We spend a third of our professional life together, and we're like another family. That's why I'm trying to convey the importance of that to our organization. It does have a high level of value within the Fire Department. I do see that in Fire we haven't experienced this problem in my career, even though I'm in full agreement with Lieutenant Lewis."

Lt. Lewis said, "Chief Samels points are very well made, it's different points in time. There may come a time when you don't have a lot of people interested in promotion and it's a good thing, we open it up to the outside. If we have a lot of internal candidates interested, well hopefully they're the best candidates and they rise to the top, so you do get the best candidate in those situations. Also, the City of Tallmadge hired an outsider who had retired from Tallmadge one year ago and was technically an outside candidate. So, it's interesting, there's probably no harm in opening it up to outsiders."

MOTION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH POLICE CHIEF EXTERNAL PROMOTIONS made by Ms. Sessions, seconded by Mr. Hathaway, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 3-0.

Safety Administration

Police Department

Personnel changes read.

Fire Department

Personnel changes read.

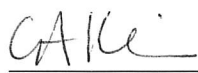
Community Development

Personnel change read.

Adjournment

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:29 PM made by Ms. Sessions, seconded by Ms. Klein, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 3-0.

Minutes approved: ✓


Christine Klein


Marilyn Sessions


Matthew Hathaway