

MINUTES
MARION CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
April 1, 2014

The Marion Civil Service Commission met on Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. in the Finance Conference Room at City Hall. Commission members present were Mettler, Botkin, and Hagen. Absent: None. Also present: Fire Chief, Terry Jackson

Motion by Mettler, second by Hagen to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2014 meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion by Mettler, second by Botkin to receive and file memo dated March 24, 2014 from Fire Chief Terry Jackson informing that Curtis Sutcliffe has successfully completed his one-year probationary period. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion by Mettler, second by Hagen to receive and file memo dated March 25, 2014 from Fire Chief Terry Jackson announcing his retirement date as June 2nd, 2014. All in favor, motion carried.

The commission members began a discussion regarding an upcoming fire chief testing. The last testing for Fire Chief was in 1999 and there were only nine candidates. Each candidate filled out a questionnaire with their application. The candidates each completed a take home essay test and a written essay test. Finally interviews were held in front of a panel. The scores from the questionnaire, take-home essay, written essay test and interviews were tabulated and a certified list was created. The commission members were also informed of what other cities do: Cedar Rapids screened applicants based on criteria developed with the Civil Service Commission. Candidates were selected to complete a written interview. The Civil Service Commission interviewed the top candidates and a certified list was created. The City Manager and a panel then held interviews. Iowa City required a cover letter, resume, three professional references, and written responses to a five item questionnaire. Five candidates were then chosen to participate in two panel interviews and meet and greet with the public. Two finalists were then chosen to participate in a final interview the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and HR Administrator. Dubuque hires McCann Associates to do a written test and a certified list is created with the scores. Cedar Falls provides a survey to the candidates that met minimum requirements. The surveys are scored by a committee and a certified list is prepared off these scores. Since City Manager, Lon Pluckhahn was on his way, the commission members decided to move forward on the agenda and come back to this topic.

The commission members held a short discussion on the Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT) requirement. They were informed that each fire department in the consortium is providing the candidate with proof of having passed the CPAT in their own way. Cedar Falls is awarding a certificate and Iowa City is writing letters. It had been discussed before that cards were to be provided to the candidates and the cards should be used as proof, however, these cards are currently not being issued. City Manager, Lon Pluckhahn arrived at 8:25 a.m. While Davenport has a database of candidates who have passed the CPAT, the list is not being updated quickly. Fire Chief Terry Jackson said the CPAT Consortium will be meeting to get things

standardized and straightened out. In the meantime, it is recommended that the Civil Service Commission accept any written proof of CPAT completion as long as the test date is included. One of the main purposes of the consortium is to eliminate having to take the CPAT multiple times and to share resources. Hagen asked City Manager, Lon Pluckhahn what his thoughts on this issue were. Lon stated that he agreed with Terry—the important thing is that the candidate has taken and passed the CPAT. It should not matter whether the proof comes in the form of a certificate or letter.

Motion by Botkin, second by Mettler to accept written proof of passing the CPAT provided by the candidate as long as the document was originally provided by a member of the CPAT Consortium as proof of completion, the test date is provided, and it can be verified either by the database or by the department that held the testing.

City Manager Lon Pluckhahn was informed the commission has discussed what was done in the past and what other departments are doing to test for fire chiefs. Lon informed the commission he was thinking the test should be of the essay format conducted by the commission. He would like to have a certified list of approximately five candidates. These candidates would then be invited to a meet and greet with the public and then will participate in interviews held by a panel including 1-2 volunteer firefighters (nominated by the department), 1-2 council members (including Paul Draper), and 1-2 department heads (including Police Chief Harry Daugherty). Mettler showed concern that having volunteer firefighters on the panel could significantly impact the interviews of internal candidates. Pluckhahn explained that is why he likes to have such a large panel. If a member of the panel were to treat a candidate unfairly, it would not make a huge impact on the overall score. It would also be easy to recognize if the panel member is treating the candidate unfairly if the other five members of the panel scored that candidate consistently. The commission members asked Manager Pluckhahn where the questions for the interview would come from. Pluckhahn said he already had a list started that he uses frequently with department heads. He would also add questions from different members of the interview panel as each panel member would have questions of their own they would like to ask. For instance, Pluckhahn is more interested in the Fire Chief's ability to speak publicly, write well, and budget, whereas Police Chief Daugherty would want to know if the Fire Chief would work well with the Police Department, and the volunteer firefighters would want to know what kind of leadership the chief would provide to them and what training would look like. It was mentioned that the questionnaire used in the past covers a lot of these areas and would be a good assessment to include in the testing process, as it is more objective than an essay. Pluckhahn indicated he would be fine with including the questionnaire. The requirements for the position were read: Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science or closely related field & a minimum of five years of fire department supervisory experience. A Bachelor's Degree in any discipline may be substituted for the degree in a Fire Science or related discipline if the individual has completed formal coursework equivalent to the Kirkwood Fire Science Certificate Program. Pluckhahn recommended the commission narrow the list of degrees they would accept for substitution. A bachelor's degree in a related field such as business administration should be acceptable whereas a degree in the fine arts should not be. Hagen asked if the job description needed updated and requested that we look at other cities' job descriptions for fire chief. Pluckhahn said the job descriptions were updated in 2008 and he doubts any revisions are necessary. Other cities job descriptions will be provided at the next meeting. When asked about a timeline, Pluckhahn said

he would like to see the position advertised for three weeks to a month in local newspapers and various job boards on the internet. He would ideally like to hold the interviews in June. The discussion was then closed with a continuation to be held through email and at the next meeting.

There being no further business, Botkin made the motion to adjourn at 8:48 a.m., second by Hagen. All in favor, motion carried.

Lianne Kula, Clerk of Commission