



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION MEETING

February 28, 2023

Members Present: Tim Fenwick, Chair
Kyle Herman, Vice-Chair
Gary Spring

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Debra Bennington, Civil Service Clerk
Mark Stone, Fire Chief
Bryan Snavelly, Police Captain

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fenwick called the special Civil Service Commission meeting of February 28, 2023 to order at 8:01 a.m. and Ms. Bennington called the roll.

II. BUSINESS ITEMS

A. REVIEW PROPOSALS – FIREFIGHTER ENTRY-LEVEL EXAMINATION

The Commission reviewed a proposal submitted by Ryan-Ramsey HR Solutions, LLC for in-house testing along with pricing for on-line testing by National Testing Network (NTN).

Chief Stone stated he is interested in using NTN for the availability. Ryan-Ramsey's testing schedule is further out than when we would like to test. He thought it would be the best choice considering our timeline. He noted there would be a cost to the applicant; however, if they previously tested with NTN they could have their score transferred to us at a reduced cost. They also would be able to test over a period of weeks instead of one day. We had good success using them for our last test. The number of applicants was down; however, we had a broader applicant pool.

Mr. Herman asked about the process for requesting proposals to ensure there was a range of applicants. Chief Stone replied we have had difficulty in the past getting responses. Several companies have changed ownership, and the pool of companies has shrunk. Mr. Fenwick stated we always look for potential companies and the Chiefs bring options, but there are not many available. Mr. Fenwick gave an overview of our testing statistics and stated when comparing the number of applicants to previous years the numbers are very low. For firefighter in 2011, we had 318 applicants and 292 took the test; in 2022, we had 66 applicants and 53 took the test. For police officer in 2011, we had 244 applicants and 184 took the test; in 2022, we had 25 applicants and 11 took the test. He thought that was partially why fewer companies are providing this service – they cannot survive since they make their money on the number of

applicants tested. We have to be open to alternatives and be on the lookout for ways to increase applicants and proposals.

Mr. Spring asked if there were any departments being innovative to attract candidates. Chief Stone replied last year in Cuyahoga County eight (8) fire departments joined together to give an in-person test to draw a larger pool of candidates. The scores were then good for all of those departments. Some departments have changed their age range. Akron, for instance, has lowered their minimum age requirement to seventeen (17), which is not something we would do.

Mr. Herman asked why the number of applicants has declined, was it part of the overall job market tightening. Chief Stone replied it was to a degree but he thought the culture of our country/world has changed. Kids see people having fantastic jobs that are not blue-collar jobs and this is a blue-collar job. We are trying to relay to the community that you get the most bang for your buck to become a firefighter/paramedic. There is very little investment for school and you can get a well-paying job. He stated we will be promoting our job at the Community Showcase in a few weeks and we are looking to promote it more in the schools. Currently, there is a scholarship in the high school through the union. They do not advertise the scholarship well, so we have invited them to advertise it through our Community Showcases, open houses, etc. We recognize the key age bracket to focus on is Kimpton since middle school is the age when kids start thinking about a career path. Kimpton is in our school district, but not in our City so Chief Stone has spoken to the Munroe Falls Chief about letting our fire safety educator come to try to influence the kids.

Mr. Spring stated he is on the Board of Metro Transit and they are struggling to fill open positions. They started having events where people could come and drive their new electric buses and this has increased applicants. He suggested letting people come and drive a fire truck and talk to personnel.

Motion:

Mr. Fenwick moved and Mr. Herman seconded to approve the proposal for National Testing Network.

Yes Votes: Fenwick, Herman, Spring

No Votes: None. The motion carried.

Mr. Spring asked if any departments pay all or part of a candidates testing fee; Chief Stone replied he is not aware of any, however years ago Akron gave a free test. Captain Snavelly replied both police and fire departments use a digital platform for applying and that cost is typically passed on to the candidate. The City offsets that cost so candidates do not have to pay both testing and application fees. Chief Stone stated there has been talk at the Summit County Chief's Association about doing a group test, but they have not reached an agreement. Historically, we have not done a good job promoting the fire service in schools other than fire safety education in the elementary schools. Portage Lakes Career Center, Tri-C, and Trumbull County all have a fire program that works with high school. We do not have anything like that nor do we have the facilities. Cuyahoga Falls is planning to build a training facility in a few years, and we are

excited because we plan to rent it. Maybe at that time a regional program could get started.

B. REVIEW PROPOSALS – POLICE OFFICER ENTRY-LEVEL EXAMINATION

The Commission reviewed a proposal submitted by Ryan-Ramsey HR Solutions, LLC for in-house testing along with pricing for on-line testing by National Testing Network (NTN).

Captain Snavelly stated he spoke to Chief Film and they would like to use NTN. We have used Ramsey in the past for many years and we used NTN for our last test. While the results from our last test were not great, NTN has a more unique way of testing – the ability for a candidate to test on their own schedule versus the barrier of coming on one day at one time to take a test. In the past, there have been conflicts where a viable candidate, who is in the police academy and is the target audience, could not attend the civil service test because they were in the academy. Having an avenue for testing that enables a candidate to take the test from home over a specified time seems to be a good option. We have been innovative by using a digital application that allows for an easier application process and communication throughout the hiring process with candidates. Nationwide, police departments are struggling and we have been seeing that over time.

Mr. Fenwick commented we have not used Ryan-Ramsey since Ryan became part of Ryan-Ramsey, but they might be better suited for promotional testing than entry level at this point.

Mr. Herman asked what measures NTN takes to deter cheating since testing is on-line. Captain Snavelly replied they use many of the similar procedures as college on-line testing. There is a moderator, candidates have to scan the room with their phone to show no one else is in the room, and if the moderator hears another voice or sees someone in the room then the test is void. NTN also has in-person locations available that are equipped with computers and moderators.

Motion:

Mr. Fenwick moved and Mr. Spring seconded to accept the proposal from National Testing Network.

Yes Votes:	Fenwick, Herman, Spring
No Votes:	None. The motion carried.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 a.m.

Tim Fenwick
Chair, Civil Service Commission

Debra Bennington
Civil Service Clerk

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