

Asheville Civil Service Board  
August 3, 2012 8am  
Sixth Floor City Hall

**Present Board:** Larry Harris, Chair; Marv Rosen; Virginia Robinson; Jacquelyn Hallum; Alan Coxie; and Marc Hunt, Liaison.

**Staff:** Kelley Dickens, Adam Diaz, and Holly Waltemyer

**Guests:** Asst Fire Chief David McFee

## I. Welcome

Larry Harris calls meeting to order at 8:00 am.

## II. Approval of May Minutes

Alan Coxie made a motion to approve the May minutes. Jacquelyn Hallum seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

## III. AFD Promotional Process Change

Asst Chief McFee seeks board member opinions on a possible change to the AFD promotional processes in the future.

- As an example of what happens often with AFD promotional processes, Asst Chief McFee discusses their current promotional process for Engineer.
- The process includes five components (listed in order):
  - Written Assessment
  - 3 Practical components
  - Interviews
- There are thirty two candidates for this position. Allowing all candidates to participate in the practical component is very time consuming, labor intensive and can get very expensive.
- Professionals from across the state are brought in to evaluate the candidates.
- Asst Chief McFee hands out details to the board on one practical component, the pumping evaluation. This evaluation will take four long days for 32 candidates. This assessment requires four AFD staff and 2 outside assessors to work the 4 day process.
- The current Engineer promotional process will continue as planned, but the AFD would like to have the Civil Service Boards opinion on reducing the number of candidates that make it to the practical portion of the process in the future.
- For future processes, AFD wants to allow a predetermined number of candidates to progress past the written assessment. This predetermined number will be based on how many candidates can be efficiently and effectively managed during the latter stages of that specific promotional process. For example, if AFD can accommodate 18 candidates during the practical and interview stages, they would progress the top 18 candidates based on the written assessment scores.
- Another example of difficulty processing applicants is the 602 applications submitted for the entry level fire fighter positions. 222 candidates reached the interview stage, but only the top 150 were interviewed because AFD could not manage to interview all the candidates.
- AFD and HR want to avoid assigning an arbitrary pass/fail score to the written assessment. The written assessments being used have no recommended or validated pass/fail score.
- Asst Chief McFee asks the Civil Service Board if allowing a predetermined number of applicants past the written assessment is an acceptable practice.
- Marv Rosen asked about increasing the minimum requirements.
  - Kelley Dickens explained the limitations on raising requirements due to federal regulations and the ability to recruit for a diverse applicant pool.
- Marv Rosen asked if Asst Chief McFee wanted to establish a practice of interviewing a certain percentage of qualified candidates.
  - Asst Chief McFee recommends determining how many candidates can efficiently be managed and use that number for that specific new hire/promotional process instead of progressing a set percentage of candidates

- Establishing a validated pass/fail score on the written assessment would require the vendor to validate the assessment
  - The vendor would have to be on site to observe AFD processes and policies.
  - Validating would also require 10-12 current AFD staff to take assessment and give their opinion of how others would score. That creates a situation where employees know the questions to which their coworkers are being tested.
  - AFD wants to avoid questions and answers being leaked or even the perception of such
  - It would cost around \$1,500 to have the written assessment validated
  - Any modifications to the validated assessment would void the validation.
- Kelley Dickens supports AFD recommendation of establishing number of candidates to progress to practical and interview stages by determining how many candidates can effectively be processed.
- Marv Rosen wants to see some type of standard in place to fairly eliminate candidates. His example given was to progress only the candidates over the median score.
- Alan Coxie asked if the evaluation process could be restructured to eliminate more candidates on the front end to alleviate having more candidates than can be managed.
  - Asst Chief McFee stated the written assessment is given first, which typically eliminates the most candidates. Then the practical assessments are given which eliminate the most candidates outside of the written.
- Larry Harris agrees with recommendation from Asst Chief McFee. He thinks this is the best way to avoid a charge over arbitrary pass/fail scores
  - Alan Coxie agrees with Larry Harris.
- Alan Coxie and Jacquelyn Hallum agree with Asst. Chief McFee regarding not validating because staff will know the questions on the written assessment
- Alan Coxie believes the practical assessments should be used as a training opportunity. The department and City will benefit from more candidates taking the practical assessment for the fact that it gives those individuals that much more experience.
- Alan Coxie feels uncomfortable deciding on the number of candidates the AFD can effectively assess without more information.
  - That is something the AFD will have to research more about. This number would have to be decided on each recruitment and/or promotional process
  - Alan Coxie asked if there is a nationally accepted ratio to determine number of candidates needed for each open position.
  - HR knows of no such standard
- Marv Rosen is worried the proposed process may eliminate really good candidates that do not perform well on written tests
- Asst Chief McFee explains that the future may present a situation where the AFD has to decide between:
  - 1) reducing the number of candidates progressing to the practical assessments or
  - 2) testing all, but using different assessors which will create an unfair and inaccurate rating of candidates
  - Coxie would like to see a dept survey to see how larger fire departments run their promotional processes.
- Hallum asked if someone is tracking the cost.
  - Kelley Dickens explained the cost will be different than in past because they're testing more candidates. The cost will be known once the promotional process is complete.
  - She also added the AFD is not as concerned with cost as much as making sure the process is as effective as it can be.

Decision: This issue will remain open. The next AFD new hire or promotional process presenting these same difficulties will be brought to the Civil Service Board for guidance.

#### **IV. Asheville Municipal Golf Course**

Kelley Dickens updated the board on current state of the golf course

- The City has gone through a 8-9 month process to evaluate different options for operating the Municipal Golf Course
- The golf course has lost money annually over the past several years.
- Several companies replied to an RFP to take over operations
- Finance worked with Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts to review each company
- City Council's Finance subcommittee was presented a recommendation to move forward with a lease option with Pope Golf.
  - Pope Golf would lease the gold course and pay the City of Asheville a percentage of revenues
  - The City will not pay Pope Golf to operate the golf course
- The proposal will be heard by Council in August
  - If approved, a transition period will take place.
  - All nine current golf course employees have been guaranteed a chance to interview with Pope Golf
  - Pope Golf typically retains 95% of employees once they take over operations
  - That does not mean these employees will be hired with the same pay, hours or benefits
  - HR will assist the golf course employees in any way it can, whether they would like to stay with City or work for Pope Golf
  - Holly Waltemyer is working with the golf course staff to determine their interests and how HR can support them
- The Parks and Recreation Director is working with Pope Golf to establish a transition timeline if proposal is approved by Council
- Marc Hunt added losses have historically been around \$100,000 in some years
  - Pope Golf's proposal states they will pay City 10% of gross revenues resulting in the \$80,000 - \$90,000 range annually
  - Council would likely invest that 10% into capital improvements at the golf course
- Larry Harris asked what the lease term would be if approved
  - Marc Hunt stated the lease term would be 5 years with extension potential
- Alan Coxie asked how the lease could affect green fees
  - Marc Hunt explained the lease agreement limits green fee increases

#### **V. Employee Picnic**

HR is in the early planning stages of the annual employee picnic

- The picnic is scheduled for October 10
- Adam Diaz will email board more information
- The board is welcome to come and participate

#### **VI. Parking for City Council and Boards**

HR is working to get access to lower parking lot for Council and Board members to use when they have meetings. The CSB members will receive their access cards soon.

#### **VII. Adjourn**

Larry Harris adjourned at 9:15 am