

Civil Service Commission

Special Meeting

March 22, 2022 – 5:30pm

Present: Chairman Mike Hawkins; Commission members Nate Falkenstein, John Potkalitsky and Shane Barker. Also present: Chief Brian Ripley, Lt. Vince Yakopovich and Secretary Jon Hoover

Absent: Commission member Dave Hetrick

MOTIONS:

- **Mr. Hawkins moved, second by Mr. Falkenstein, to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2022 Annual Organizational Meeting. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.**
- **Mr. Potkalitsky moved, second by Mr. Falkenstein, to merge the full-time police & fire dispatch eligibility lists from the August 17, 2021 and January 5, 2022 entrance exams. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.**

Moving directly into new business, discussion was had regarding the need to hold an entrance exam for the Fire Department as the previous eligibility list has expired.

Chief Ripley detailed the various methods of earning extra credit he would like to see on the next firefighter/paramedic entrance exam. Those methods include: 10 points for current, part-time employees of the Macedonia Fire Department who have successfully passed probation, regardless of how long they've been employed by the City; 5 points for current, part-time employees of the Macedonia Fire Department that have successfully completed orientation. The intention of these extra credit points is to encourage new FF/medics to put down roots and stay with the Department. Other extra credit methods would be 5 points for full-time or part-time FF/medics with another agency that have at least 2,080 work hours in the last 24 months; 5 points for veterans that provide the DD 214 stating honorable discharge; 5 points for physical agility test results of under 3 minutes and 30 seconds from Tri-C and Stark State.

Mr. Potkalitsky asked why certain communities collaborate on one Civil Service entrance exam, to which Mr. Hawkins and Lt. Yakopovich replied that national testing tends to attract more applicants. Lt. Yakopovich further stated that an issue the City might run into if they were to participate in collaborative testing is that Macedonia is the lowest-paying agency compared to other agencies in our region, and applicants are more likely to choose the higher-paying positions. He referenced a 5-year study comparing Stow, Hudson, Twinsburg and Macedonia's volume of arrests, felonies, tickets and calls. Macedonia's numbers in these categories were at the same amount or greater, yet all the other cities' police personnel are paid more.

- **Mr. Barker moved, second by Mr. Potkalitsky, to conduct a Fire Department entrance exam. Motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.**

Discussion continued from the previous Civil Service Commission meeting on the question of whether the Commission would adopt a "1 of 3" rule when it comes to promotional decisions within the Police Department.

Mr. Hawkins stated that rules for promotions within the Fire Department were recently changed to a "1 of 3" rule because the Mayor, Chief and union representatives were in favor of it. While he is pleased it worked out for the Fire Department in this instance, he is not sure they did the right thing by changing the rule. Mr. Hawkins stated his belief that the promotion process should be neutral, avoid politics, and be perceived as fair. If utilizing an assessment center is added to the promotional process, care needs to be taken in order to assure that it is composed of Chiefs from similar-sized agencies with enough distance where the assessor and those being assessed do not know each other.

Mr. Barker stated that he does not believe doing well on a test necessarily means you are the best leader. He also opined that rules should not be changed for the individual who happens to be the current Mayor, but with the thought of setting policy for the unknown next person that may hold that position in the future. You could have an example where a Mayor has been in office for a month having to make personnel decisions despite perhaps not being familiar with those up for promotion. He further stated he does not like changing the rules "in the middle of the game".

Mr. Falkenstein noted after researching promotional processes for multiple Police and Fire agencies, he was amazed at how vastly different it is from the private sector. He shared that he does not believe the number one test taker receiving the promotion is the way to go, but on the other hand, does not see how the Mayor picking 1 of 3 would help morale.

Mr. Potkalitsky questioned why the Police Department does not currently utilize an assessment center and stated that assessments offer insight into the candidate that you can not learn from a test.

Lt. Yakopovich stated the current discussion of the "1 of 3" came about after some in the Police Department felt the most recent sergeant's promotional exam did not produce the best outcome. While he and the Chief certainly do know the officers well and who might be the best fit for the job, others in the City might not have as well-rounded an impression of the officers. He also shared that while the Police union was initially in favor of the "1 of 3" rule, it was under the impression that the top three scores on the written exam would then be invited to take an assessment. However, when the union was informed what "1 of 3" meant in this instance, Lt. Yakopovich stated the union was against the Mayor picking "1 of 3". He also stated that after being asked by the Mayor to vote whether they wanted to change to a "1 of 3" rule, the sergeants voted unanimously against it. Further, the Police Department essentially acts as an assessment during the second interview with candidates. Lt. Yakopovich shared that during the 28 years he has been employed with Macedonia, there have been 18 promotions and only two have "washed out". He questioned whether it is fair for the Mayor to make an assessment that affects the livelihood and career of an individual based partly on the gossip and rumors he or she hears. Finally, he shared he does not like the idea of introducing even the slightest indication that a personnel decision could be based on political factors and believes all who pass the written exam should be given the opportunity to take the assessment.


Mr. Potkalitsky asked if perhaps the Mayor, Police Department and the Civil Service Commission each "put their fingerprints" on three candidates for a weighted decision, to which Mr. Hawkins expressed discomfort having the Commission weigh in on candidates since the members do not know them. Mr. Hawkins then suggested everyone think more about the topic and that it will be revisited again at the next Commission meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

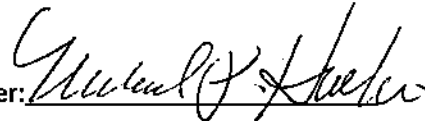
- None

Mr. Hawkins moved, second by Mr. Falkenstein to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously by a voice vote at approximately 6:47pm

Date: 5/25/22

Attest: 

Jon Hoover, Civil Service Commission Secretary

Presiding Officer: 

Mike Hawkins, Chairman