

City of Hubbard, Ohio Civil Service Commission

220 West Liberty Street, Hubbard, Ohio 44425 – (330) 534-5719

Regular meeting called to order at 8:00 AM on Tuesday, January 09, 2018

Present: Dave Morris, Ray Farcas, Mike Mogg

Others Present: Mayor John Darko, Service Director Dan Livingston, Safety Director Lou Carsone, Police Chief James Taafe, Ed Palestro, Secretary Marianne Hallapy

Motion #1: A motion was made by Dave Morris and seconded by Mike Mogg to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2017 regular session and the minutes of the October 10, 2017 regular session as submitted. Motion carried 3-0.

Notation #1: Discussion of the Police Sergeant Promotion Assessment test, with assessment on September 16, 2017 and written exam on September 30, 2017 by the OACP:

Carsone: Safety Director Lou Carsone reviewed the minutes of previous meetings with comments from officers taking the sergeant promotion assessment test and wanted to address some of the issues presented. He began with statements attacking the integrity of the process of the testing. Carsone noted that the letter addressed to the FOP which acknowledged an assessment and written examination for the promotional sergeant test was sent via email by Police Chief Jim Taafe on July 12, 2017 (so this date would be the latest that the candidates would have been informed of the test – which gave them two months prior to the test dates). The email from Taafe also offered assistance with any questions involving the process by calling him. The packets were distributed on July 25, 2017 to each candidate via email. There were no questions on the process of the testing, only one asking about the letter written to the FOP.

Carsone mentioned that there was a comment made about “wasting the taxpayers’ money”. He replied by stating that “the assessment center is an important process for the purpose of promotions and that although the process is usually costly, it’s record of validity and legal defensibility has justified the cost.” Carsone stated that he takes the taxpayers’ money seriously and doesn’t believe that the testing was a waste of money. He noted that he was one the one who suggested the process and stands behind his recommendation. Carsone mentioned that looking at the resumes of the panel conducting the assessment, it’s unimpeachable. They’re graduates of the FBI National Academy, with decades of experience in police administration. “I don’t think the OACP would waste our money,” he stated.

He touched on the comment about the old, written exam that only tested on current policies and city ordinances. Carsone replied that the statement is not factual. He provided the board with a list of reference materials from a sergeant promotional test given in 1991, which included four text books in addition to policies, the Ohio Revised Code and city ordinances. He noted that the content included in the 2003 promotional exam mirrored the previous written exam. Carsone wanted to clarify that the written exam included more than policies and ORC. Carsone also added that anyone taking the exams had to find the textbooks on their own. In contrast, the candidates taking the September 2017 assessment were able to obtain the single

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source book through the OACP, making it a lot easier to get the book. Carsons added that the book wasn't just something that one guy wrote – according to comments given by a few of the candidates. He noted that the book is a combination of four different police text books edited and combined into one book. – “It's not just the opinion of one author, it's a combination of several prestigious authors,” stated Carsons. He said that the attack on the material of the testing is not valid. Carsons also commented on candidates' statements that they just had to memorize the material for testing. He stated that a sergeant's role has changed over time, adding that a sergeant is expected, on a regular basis, to pick up new material and then read, assimilate and produce results from that new information or technology available to the department. “They need to read stuff, put it together and make determinations constantly – they're not just patrol supervisors,” he said.

Another comment made was “In fifteen minutes someone can't make a judgement on us and decide who's going to be the best supervisor”. Carsons noted that the statement wasn't factual, adding that there were three assignments given. The first was dealing with a subordinate – each candidate was given 20 minutes. Since there were three assessors, each minute is tripled, so the 20 minutes turned into 60 minutes of which each candidate had the time to impress the panel. He stated that collectively, they only used 39% of the time available to them. They had the time, but few chose to use it. On the second scenario (a supervisor presenting training to his shift), the candidates used about 81% of the time (writing on a topic they are familiar with and giving a presentation to the panel). Carsons noted that this is exercise was very valid to how the department currently does things. “Our sergeants are expected to teach their shifts,” he said. The third exercise was to write a four-page analysis, with a solution to a problem (which dealt with a high rise with a mix of people). Carsons stated that this was very relevant to our city because it was developed specifically for the city. It also brought in one of the city's newest policies mandated by the state, which involves community policing and problem oriented policing. “It's Police Academy 101 stuff to know that your writing represents you,” said Carsons. He noted that the candidates only used about 45% of the allocated writing. Collectively, less than two pages were completed by each. Carsons stated that they each had resources that could have been used to their benefit.

Carsons mentioned that the OACP contacted him and the Chief prior to the test for input on what they felt was important to assess as far as characteristics and qualifications for the position with the department. They also questioned current sergeants to learn more about their responsibilities and their role within the department. An OACP representative also spent a day in Hubbard, driving the streets and learning about the city, which was used to develop the three scenarios used for assessment.

He closed his comments stating, “Just because we're a small department doesn't mean that we have small problems.” Carsons mentioned that Hubbard has the same issues and problems that other cities deal with. Things that are mandated by the state have to be

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complied with by every department. He noted that the Chief doesn't have assistants like other big cities, but has the help of his sergeants, who must be able to read policies, disseminate it to their people and help the department make decisions on it and then get it implemented in addition to being patrol sergeants and answering calls. "So there's a lot more to the job than just knowing policies and codified ordinances in the City of Hubbard" said Carsone. He added that after five years (which is the mandatory minimal years of experience) that each candidate would already know all policies and ordinances, "So testing on that would not really pick the best candidate," he added.

Carsone closed by asking the board to keep a few things in mind when making the decision of whether or not to keep the assessment process for promotional exams in the future. He stated that in two years, the department will be testing for a new chief of police upon the retirement of current Police Chief Taafe. An appointment for this position will also create a vacancy for a sergeant position as well. Carsone strongly encouraged the board to keep the assessment process, adding that the small glitches with notification can be refined. He noted that the board can decide the percentage split, but felt that both the written and assessment testing should be used. He felt it was worth the money spent, taking into consideration the time spent learning about our city, along with questioning both the Chief, himself and all the current sergeants, in addition to taking all the information, analyzing and developing it into scenarios that are specifically geared to situations faced by the city's police department. Carsone stated that he has no problem with any employee expressing their opinions with regard to things pertaining to the department. He did note that the board was faced with candidates for a sergeant's position, who had no experience being sergeants, expressing their opinions and concerns of the validity of the testing procedure and what the job entailed without having any practical experience about what the job entailed.

Taafe: Police Chief Jim Taafe noted that traditionally, when the City of Hubbard did its testing, only one thing was tested, that being a candidate's ability to take a written test – that included their ability to study and their ability to retain what they studied. He stated that the goal with the assessment testing is to find the leaders and promote those leaders. Taafe reasoned that making the wrong promotion ultimately turns into a 20-year problem. He added, "\$6,000 to not make a 20-year mistake is a bargain". Taafe also talked about the relevance of the assessment. He also noted that an OACP representative spent the day questioning what the important issues were in the City of Hubbard, which carried over into the assessment – what are our problems, how do we deal with them, what mechanisms do we use, what training do we use to deal with the problems... all these aspects of problem solving. The testing used the city's problem of a now section-8 housing development and turned it into a community policing problem asking "how will you go into the Hubbard hi-rise and get the tenants that are law abiding on board to help combat with the people who are not law abiding?" Taafe felt that this was a great opportunity to determine who has leadership ability and who has the brains to

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problem solve under the pressure of someone evaluating them. “It is vitally important,” said Taafe, adding that the over-reaching goal is not just to promote someone, but to promote a leader. He noted that he doesn’t oppose criticism of the test, but he felt it was misguided.

Farcas: Board member Ray Farcas actually sat through some of the testing, noting that he observed the first scenario where the candidates had to deal with a subordinate. He felt that the exercise was excellent, noting that this is something that could happen a few times in a day. He added that the assessors were more than qualified and he was able to view how they critiqued each candidate, stating that they were very fair. Farcas admitted that the \$6,000 cost scared him at first, but after listening to Carsone and Taafe, he agrees that \$6,000 is not that much to promote the right candidate.

Mogg: Board member Mike Mogg noted that he heard all the complaints about the testing. He sees now that the book was a compilation of more than one person’s opinion about leadership. The biggest complaint that he was concerned with is that during the oral examinations the candidates were here all day for a five-minute presentation. He suggested time slots instead, however board member Dave Morris stated it would interfere with the integrity of the testing. He noted that once a candidate leaves, the content of the testing may be released, giving some candidates a competitive edge over others. Taafe mentioned that the down time each candidate has allows them to work on other tasks that may be assigned to them for the next scenario. With the tasks given, no one utilized the maximum amount of time to speak or the maximum amount of paper given for the written presentation.

Morris: Board member Dave Morris mentioned that he never questioned the integrity of the testing and felt that OACP was very fair. Being on the board for the promotional exam for police chief, he agreed that it included a variety of books with varying topics. Morris did state that he felt it was important to include ORC and local ordinances with the testing material, adding that there’s officers who may be with a department for over 20 years and still not know the laws. Chief Taafe interjected, stating that he and Carsone requested that ORC and local ordinances not be included on the written examination. Taafe and Morris disagreed on the topic.

Morris noted that as far as the percentage split between the written and the assessment, he tried every combination possible and the promotion results remained the same. Had the promotion been a written examination only, there would have been no promotion since every candidate failed. Had the promotion been through the assessment only, there would have been a different selection for sergeant. Morris added that from the number one ranked assessment to the lowest ranked assessment, there was only about a 6-point difference – so there was no standout. Morris felt that it showed that all the candidates were on an equal playing field as far as their abilities with the assessment.

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Carsone added that he and the chief had taken a lot of time looking into how to notify people: with how to write the letter, what do we want it to say, how do we get it out there, how do we answer their questions... They also consulted with the City's legal representative that deals with employee issues: is it saying what we want it to say, is it fair; are we wording this right.... Taafe added that they went to the FOP President because they had candidates that were working, candidates that were in other states- so how do you hand all the candidates the letter at the same time? After talking with the city's legal representative, it was decided to give the letter to the union representative and let them disseminate it – "That's where the wheels came off."

Morris noted that the previous minutes reflect that all candidates were told that their problem is with the FOP and that they would need to speak with them.

Carsone wanted to respond on the comments with regard to the time spent in the process in comparison to the amount of exposure time, which he said is a lot like police work. He noted that many times you arrive at a scene and wait for hours until it is resolved, so with both work and the assessment, you wait and prepare yourself for what you have to do.

Morris stated that now that the assessment has been given, the officers know what is expected and can properly train themselves for the next test down the road. Younger officers are also able to ask questions about the testing. Carsone added that Chief Taafe offers next level training to patrol officers with first line supervisor classes to give them an overview of what's expected for these positions. He also offers sergeant and administrative classes on budgeting and different facets of administration.

Mayor Darko: The Mayor mentioned that when the Chief and Safety Director brought the idea of an assessment, along with the price tag, he supported the concept and believes it's the way for the future in police promotions.

Notation #2: Service Director Dan Livingston reported that of the qualified candidate list for Electric Lineman, two candidates replied that they couldn't accept the position under the tier system with the offered wage. He stated that all candidates were brought in to interview with Electric Foreman Ed Palestro, but to date, no one has been hired for the position.

Palestro noted that he interviewed 8 of the 10 candidates and wants to move on to the second level with the skills assessment. Due to problems with the substation and other things, he ran out of time. Of the 8, he will probably bring 3 in for the skills level. He did say that the first level is a knowledge assessment, which he noted was terrible. Once the weather breaks, Palestro feels that he can move forward with the skills assessment. Palestro noted that he currently has a young trainee and apprentice that he would like to accelerate before bringing in a new trainee (for safety reasons). He added that they've both been working out of their class with meter reading, so it's hard to move them forward. He also mentioned that the City may need to

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hire another candidate based on skills, based on the City's re-positioning in the current year. Morris commended Palestro on his merit based rating system for hires and agreed that it might be in the best interest of the City to hire based on resume, rather than test taking. They also discussed a possible hiring of a meter reader. Palestro mentioned that the City is top-heavy in every department, age-wise, and it's something that needs to be looked at. Livingston added that this leads to more vacation time, so their jobs need to be filled in when they're not here.

Motion #2: A motion was made by Dave Morris and seconded by Ray Farcas to re-appoint Marianne Hallapy as Recording Secretary for the Hubbard Ohio Civil Service Commission. Motion carried 3-0.

A decision was made to keep all scheduled meetings set by the City of Hubbard. The website and local newspapers will reflect that the meeting will take place only when there's business to consider. All members were told to notify Hallapy when placing items on the agenda. It was agreed that the board would try to meet quarterly unless there's business to consider.

Morris also asked about the Water Administrator and Backflow Coordinator positions that were created. Mayor Darko replied that they were outside hires for part time positions. Morris requested that any future hires would need to be reported to the board, with the minimum qualifications and level of training required for the position. Under the Revised Code, the board would have to waive the rules for hiring for such positions.

Motion #3: A motion was made by Ray Farcas and seconded by Dave Morris to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 AM. Motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Hallapy, Secretary

David Morris, Chairman

Ray Farcas, Vice Chairman

Mike Mogg, Member