

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
ACTIONS
JULY 14, 2004
6:00 P.M.
CIVIL SERVICE CONFERENCE ROOM
3RD FLOOR, CITY HALL

Roll Call

Chairman Michael Finn called the meeting to order. In attendance were Commissioner Geraldine George; Lou Cerrito, Jr. - President of the Danbury Volunteer Firefighters Council; Paul McCallister - City of Danbury resident and former Vice President of the Danbury Volunteer Firefighters Council; Teri Boccuzzi - Vice President of DMEA/City of Danbury employee. Commissioner Frank Caracansi was not present.

NEW BUSINESS:

Preferential Points for Volunteer Firefighters - Chairman Finn stated that the first topic of discussion was the points issue regarding volunteer firefighters. Chairman Finn wanted to postpone this discussion because information required from the Fire Chief and the Training Officer has not been completed. This matter was to be discussed in next month's meeting. However, there are people in attendance who wish to discuss this matter tonight. Mr. Lou Cerrito Jr. said approximately two years ago, when this matter was brought up, the Corporation Counsel did not see a problem with the points system. From a legal standpoint, Mr. Cerrito thought everything was okay because it was passed by the Common Council. Chairman Finn explained that he had not heard of this until 5 months ago when he was talking to Tom Saadi, in general. Chairman Finn has met with Corporation Counsel and Tom Saadi. The Corporation Counsel still thinks that we have not come anywhere near meeting the requirements of the 1973 court order which is still in effect. We are reviewing a point system to see if was something we could implement. As of right now, we cannot give points to just Danbury's volunteer firefighters. We are looking at a way that maybe we could give points to volunteer firefighters from Connecticut. Danbury volunteer firefighters are trained and keep up with training. We have no way of checking on training of any other volunteer firefighters in other towns. Training Officer Thorne and Chief Siecienski are contacting the volunteer firefighters in other towns to find out their breakdown of men to women and ethnicity in the volunteer firefighter unit. The last time this was looked at, the number was at 12%. This is not near where we have to be.

The second issue we are looking at is giving points to Danbury residents. Chairman Finn states that you cannot require a firefighter to become a resident after he/she is hired. Chairman Finn

has reviewed the Patriot Act and he cannot find any information that this is no longer true. However, we might be able to require residency of first responders. As of right now, we can institute a point system for Danbury residents. If the candidate lives in Danbury, he/she can receive points on the test. After the candidate is hired, he or she is not required to remain a Danbury resident. Chairman Finn thinks the point system for Danbury resident would be very helpful and we are looking at it.

Mr. Cerrito explains that he has no problem with a point system for Danbury residents. He thinks it would be better for the community. Mr. Cerrito said that if you are first responder, you do have to go to quarterly training. The Common Council passed a points system based on levels of training that a candidate may have. Certifications issued by the State of Connecticut are issued for life and are not updated. However, certain training must be completed on a quarterly basis, such as OSHA training. If you are an interior responder/highest level firefighter in Danbury and transfer to the same position in Bethel, you still need to go for quarterly training. We are not talking about candidates who do not go to quarterly training. Mr. Cerrito does not know where or who brought up trying to keep track of training. If a candidate comes in with certification stating that he/she took the state class and he/she is a Firefighter 1 or Firefighter 2, then he/she automatically receives points. The points system is based on achieved levels.

Mr. Cerrito read the minutes from the last meeting and wanted to know why the issue of who is current and how do we keep track of other firefighters from other towns was brought up. Chairman Finn answered that points are to be given to someone who is an active member of the department, not social members. Mr. Cerrito still does not understand as to why the proposal was put forth that points are based on training. Any firefighter in the State of Connecticut or the country can get those points based on the recommendation that was put forward and was approved by the Corporation Counsel. The Corporation Counsel approved it even though there still may be a question as to whether or not we have enough women or minorities. Any volunteer firefighter can get those points no matter what race, color or creed they are. For example, a trained volunteer firefighter can receive 2 points, and then he/she could receive 2 points for being a Danbury resident. But the candidate from Bethel, he doesn't receive the 2 points for being a Danbury resident, but he can receive the 2 points for being a trained firefighter. Chairman Finn said that according to last month's minutes, these are all ideas and thoughts that came up at that meeting. In the original proposal, the points add up to a high number (approximately 11 points). If you are a veteran, you get 5 points. If you are a disabled veteran, you get 10 points. If someone receives over twenty points before he/she has taken the test, is ludicrous. Because that candidate will come out as number 1, no matter what he/she does.

Someone spoke (he did not identify himself) and said he was part of the committee that drew up the points system plan. He, Tom Saadi and Joe Scozzafava were appointed to the committee. They had quite a few meetings with input from the Fire Chief, Corporation Counsel and members of the Volunteer Firefighter's Council. This person got information from other cities in Connecticut, such as Bridgeport and Milford. Bridgeport offers 10 points for being a resident of Bridgeport at the time of test. Some other points were allowed depending other qualifications that the candidate may have. They polled all the volunteer companies in Danbury that we had to know what the physical make up of the minority membership of the company was. He remembers the minority membership being 30 to 33%. Based on what Tom Saadi had said to

him, he felt that we had a viable reasoning to go forth. They made the recommendation to institute a points system to the Civil Service Commission. The intent was to give the information to the Civil Service Commission. The Civil Service Commission reviewed it and thought it could be implemented. The Corporation Counsel was present at the meeting. He prefers that a requirement that the candidate be a resident of the City of Danbury be instituted. He is well aware of the laws in the State of Connecticut that we cannot restrict the laws and you cannot require someone to be a Danbury resident, but he thought maybe you could be a resident for a year or at least six months, before you could apply as a firefighter. He feels that someone who has lived in this town for at least a year would be more familiar. However, if the candidate moved in to Danbury the day before the test, he is a resident and he is entitled to the points.

Another recommendation was that the person submitting the information had to submit all certifications/licenses at the time of the application the certifications/licenses must be valid in order to receive points. If something proved to be invalid, one of the recommendations was that would be immediate dismissal from wherever the candidate is. If it is found out a year later that he became a firefighter under false pretenses, he is dismissed. Corporation Counsel said that was viable. Chairman Finn states that this is true with any position advertised. He wants certain safeguards because we want candidates from Danbury.

The other qualification was that the candidate had to have State of Connecticut certification. If you have Firefighter 1 certification from New York State, you will still have to go to the State of Connecticut Fire Academy to find out if you meet the qualifications. It would be preferred if the qualification was State of Connecticut certified. If a candidate was from California which has higher standards than Connecticut, then the candidate meets and exceeds the training. Then if the state certifies them, then we would have to acknowledge that. The candidate would have to take his/her certification to the State of Connecticut for review and it would need to be accepted by the State of Connecticut.

Another preferred qualification/requirement was to have a State of Connecticut driver's license. In the State of Connecticut, you either need to have a Q qualification or a CDL (Commercial Driver's License) in order to drive fire equipment.

Making sure all the qualifications and certifications are accepted by Connecticut would be the responsibility of the candidate, not the Personnel/Civil Service Department. The original recommendation was that if the candidate does not have the proper certification(s) and requirements, he/she would not be allowed to receive the points. However, the candidate can still take the test. This was approved by the Common Council in the past. He assumed that the information was passed on to the Civil Service Commission as a recommendation to give preferential points. Then in October of last year, the Mayor called him asking him if the points system had been approved. He thought the points system was in effect in December 2002. But nothing has happened in 2003 and 2004.

Commissioner George asked when the research was originally done that showed that the make up (regarding women, minorities and ethnic breakdown) of the volunteer firefighters was at 33%. Mr. Bill McAllister (past Vice-President of the Firefighter's Council) answered that information was submitted in the Fall of 2000. Mr. McAllister said that they looked at the standard minority question: females, Native American, Hispanic and Black. There is a volunteer firehouse in Danbury that is almost 100% minorities. The rest of the houses have a representative group.

The final report averaged between 28 and 33%. It depended on what they could verify for active members. Chairman Finn presents the report that was submitted to the Civil Service Commission. Chairman Finn read the report aloud. There are 213 members total of volunteer firefighters in Danbury; 13 Hispanic, 3 Black, 1 Native American, 1 Asian, 1 Brazilian, 19 minorities. The report that Chairman Finn has is incomplete. Mr. McAllister said that the report they submitted was complete. Tom Saadi may have a copy of the complete report that was submitted earlier.

Commissioner George explains that the Commission is just trying to help the Danbury volunteer firefighters without getting into any legal trouble. Chairman Finn explains that the Commission is looking at every way that the firefighters can be helped. Chairman Finn said that Tom Saadi will be invited to the next Civil Service Commission meeting to discuss the points system further.

Mr. McAllister (?) asked what would be the maximum amount of points given to a candidate? Chairman Finn answers that that has not been decided yet. He thinks 5 points is fair. That is not a final number, it's just a guess.

Commissioner George said she like the idea of checking the certifications are up to date. Chairman Finn said that some cities keep records of certification/training. However, other cities do not keep track.

Chairman Finn asks the group how would he know if a candidate is certified in an OSHA class, for example? Someone answers that there would be a list between Mr. Cerrito and the Chief that would be certified. Someone answers that after the closing date, the President of the Volunteer Firefighter's Council and the Chief would submit a list to us of all the people who could have applied for the position. Chairman Finn asks what about candidates who are not from Danbury? How do we check? Someone answers that we would have to check or ask the Chief of that particular volunteer's town.

Several conversations were going on at once. Unable to transcribe. Tape was shut off.

Tape was turned back on by Chairman Finn.

Sealer of Weights and Measures - This was a position that was advertised in the newspaper. It is not a Civil Service position. It is an appointed position. Commissioner George asked what determines if a position is a Civil Service position or not? Chairman Finn answers that is determined by the ordinances of the City. The applications will be coming to the Civil Service Commission for review.

Chairman Finn wants to go into an Executive Meeting. He makes a motion to accept the minutes of last month's meeting. Commissioner George seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The tape was turned off for the Executive Meeting session.

Tape was turned back on by Chairman Finn.

Chief Examiner - Chairman Finn asks someone to put forth a motion on the Chief Examiner's position that we advertise that position. Commissioner George put forth the motion to advertise within the next two weeks. Chairman Finn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner George made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Finn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Finn adjourned the meeting.

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