

BOARD OF FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSION
August 2, 2023
8:30 a.m.
City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, Room 404, Peoria, Illinois

ROLL CALL

The Board of Fire & Police Commission meeting was called to order by Chairperson Thomas Burke
Commissioner's present: Thomas Burke, William Watkins, William Spears, John Williams, Lynn Pearson, Leonard Unes, and Kelly Petersen
Commissioners Absent: None
Others present: Affirmative Employment Specialist Debra Bush, Fire Chief Shawn Sollberger, Assistant Fire Chief Tony Cummings, Police Captain John Briggs, Police Lieutenant Anthony Rummans, Police Chief Eric Echevarria, Police Sergeant Amy Dotson and Police Officer Christopher Collins

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lynn Pearson motioned to receive and file the minutes of Regular Meeting July 14, 2023, as presented; seconded by Kelly Peterson; all approved 7-0.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Timeline and Recruiting Efforts

Assistant Fire Chief Tony Cummings stated that they were working on creating a QR code on a card and he went to a few Commissioners to demonstrate how it works.

Fire Chief Shawn Sollberger stated that when you scan the card, it will take you to the City of Peoria's website, NTN Testing, and the Fire Department information.

Assistant Fire Chief Cummings stated that when you tap the card on someone's phone, it will take you directly to the information and there would be no need for a bunch of business cards to hand out.

Assistant Fire Chief Cummings stated that he had ordered one to see how it worked after he put things together and see if any other changes needed to be made before they order the actual card.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that Division Chief Stephany Baxter went to Illinois Central College (ICC) and met with the Women's Basketball Coach Karrie Redeker, and she wanted to have the Fire Department meet with all of the Coaches at ICC.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they will have a meeting with all the Coaches and try to garner interest from the various teams.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that right now there are two females on the basketball team that are interested right now in pursuing a career as a Firefighter with the City of Peoria.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that the Interview Now platform has garnered about 40 young people interested in being a Firefighter. He stated that this was a great platform to recruit individuals and be able to talk with them right away.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they are hiring six Firefighters on August 25, 2023, and they will begin their training on August 28, 2023. Also, there are three more candidates left on the current list.

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Fire Chief Sollberger stated that there are various agencies that want to participate in the City of Peoria Fire Training class.

Sergeant Amy Dotson passed out the Recruitment Team information for the month of July 2023 to the Commission.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they have various applicants going through the process right now and 21 has passed the POWER test and have taken their polygraph and psychological examinations.

Sergeant Dotson stated that there aren't very many career fairs to go to in July due to the students being gone for the summer.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they are scheduled to attend numerous career fairs for the Fall semester including Indiana State University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and Harris-Stowe State University.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they have done numerous community engagements, which seem to be a better recruiting tool. The engagements were as follows:

- Department tour featuring the Bearcat & a squad – Swearing-In of 5-year-old Isaac Furness
- Emergency Responders Expo (Tazewell County) hosted by Speak Out
- KinderCare Meet & Greet (Infant – 12 years of age)
- Active Shooter Presentation for PCCEO
- Emergency Responders Expo (Grand Prairie) hosted by Peoria County Sheriff's Office
- Summer Safe Zone – Glen Oak Park
- North Valley Block Party – Resident Officer Sponsored Event
- Heart of Illinois Fair Swine Showmanship Competition
- Recruiting Expo – Later this month

Sergeant Dotson stated that they will be hosting a Recruitment Expo at the Police Department back parking lot with their equipment there for view, as well as recruiters on hand to help them apply right there from laptops that will be provided.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they teamed up with Discover Peoria to help with an upcoming video project.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they swore in two Police Cadets and one lateral Police Officer transfer from Washington, Illinois in July.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they did a "Train the Chaplains" on radio safety for field work since they go to calls and are present at various incidents, they should have the knowledge on how to use the radio in case they are needed.

Sergeant Dotson stated that the Physical Fitness Team is still going strong, and they meet three times a week; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, utilizing the Police Department gym, Rock Island Train, and Yoga in the Park.

Sergeant Dotson stated that the Police Training Academy (PTI) standards were lowered, but they only use the old standards to strive for during the physical fitness training, which the candidates will be exceeding the standards when they go to PTI.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they will be swearing-in 10 applicants on August 28, 2023, for the September academy and the others left on the list will be going to the January academy.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they have 10 Police Recruits at PTI and are set to graduate on August 24, 2023.

Sergeant Dotson stated that they are making changes to the hiring process and revamping the orientation sessions for the possible candidates.

Lieutenant Anthony Rummans stated that they are making changes to the testing timeline by getting rid of the physical ability test and will now do the P.O.W.E.R. test in its place.

Lieutenant Rummans stated that with the other physical agility test, we had to schedule the tests around when the building was available, but now the P.O.W.E.R. test can be taken anywhere like Military bases, colleges, etc.

Lieutenant Rummans stated that about 14 other jurisdictions were surveyed and only 2 out of those used another physical agility test, which we were one of the two, and the others used the P.O.W.E.R. test.

Police Chief Eric Echevarria stated that they were trying to make changes to the process to eliminate some of Debra's tasks so she can have more time to do other parts of her job.

Police Chief Echevarria stated that they want to get something from the psychological examinations to better provide the tools to the Field Training Officer to better be able help the Recruits make it through the training process.

Police Chief Echevarria stated that they put in for a grant to help pay for the fees associated with taking the written examination through the National Testing Network.

Police Chief Echevarria stated that they are working with Pringles Robotics to get a robot to help with the recruiting, training, etc.

Police Chief Echevarria stated that they have 24 open Police Recruit spots, with 20 candidates with conditional offers going through the process right now.

Commissioner Kelly Petersen stated that he would like a report to see the openings in the Police and Fire Departments.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they have six Firefighters starting on August 25, 2023, and then they would not have any openings at that time, but they do foresee some retirements before the end of the year.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they still have seven candidates left on the Eligibility List.

Commissioner Petersen asked about a Social Service project with Carle Health.

Chief Echevarria stated that the job opening at Carle Health is available for the Director position and when this is filled, they can hire eight Social Workers. This is a grant funded position and a pilot for three years.

Commissioner Petersen stated that he was impressed with the out of the box thinking that they are doing for these various projects.

Chairperson Burke asked if Jeff Council had anything else he would like to address to the Commission.

Jeff Council, Traffic Safety Engineer passed out his Roadway Worker and Responder Safety Cards to those Commissioners that had not received the information.

Mr. Council briefly explained the Scene Risk Analysis checklist to the Commissioners.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that Mr. Council should reach out to him, and he will get him connected with their Fire Training Division and work to create a training platform like a video, PowerPoint presentation, etc. to get the word out to other agencies.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Lynn Pearson moved to adjourn to Executive Session under 2c (1) of the Open Meetings Acts, seconded Kelly Petersen; all approved 7-0.

RECONVENE TO REGULAR SESSION

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Petersen stated that he felt that it would be handy for the Commissioners to have business cards in their names to give out to prospective candidates.

Assistant Fire Chief Cummings stated that the cards that can be place right on the candidate's phone to direct them to the website, job application, etc., could be used in replacement of the actual business cards.

Commission Chairperson Burke asked if the QR code could be enlarged on a poster that could be put in Commissioner Petersen's restaurant and other establishments for candidates to apply.

Assistant Fire Chief Cummings stated that he would research this idea.

Commission Chairperson Burke stated that the business card discussion will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Commission Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the minutes from the Regular Meeting July 14, 2023, and they are not to be released per Attorney Perkins.

Bill Spears moved to approve the Executive Session minutes from the Regular Meeting July 14, 2023, and they are not to be released; seconded by John Williams; all approved 7-0.

Commission Chairperson Burke stated that a Special meeting will be scheduled to review the Police Recruit psychological examinations.

Commission Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the Police Recruit polygraph examinations and P23-035 will have their offer of employment withdrawn due to admissions made on the polygraph examinations. Police Recruit candidates P23-027, P23-028, P23-029, P23-030, P23-031, P23-032, P23-033, and P23-034 will continue in the process.

William Watkins moved to withdraw the offer of employment from Police Recruit candidate P23-035 due to admissions made on the polygraph examination, seconded by Lynn Pearson; all approved 7-0.

ADJOURN MEETING

There being no further business, William Watkins moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Lynn Pearson; all approved 7-0.

APPROVED:

Thomas Burke, Chairperson

William Spears, Vice Chairperson

John Williams Jr., Secretary

William Watkins, Member

Lynn Pearson, Member

Kelly Petersen, Member

Leonard Unes, Member