

BOARD OF FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSION
November 6, 2024
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 Spears, Kelly Petersen, Barry Anderson, Mickeisha Armstrong, Pastor Marvin Hightower and Terry Cooper

Commissioners Absent: None

Others present: Affirmative Employment Specialist Debra Bush, Police Captain John Briggs, Police Officer Christopher Collins, Police Sergeant Ryan Winkle, Police Officer Ciara Barker, Sergeant Brian Richards, Police Training Sergeant, Fire Chief Shawn Sollberger and Ashley Abner, Safety and Worker's Compensation Administrator

Commission Chairman Tom Burke called the meeting to order.

Chairman Burke asked Ashley Abner to introduce herself to the Commission.

Ashley Abner stated she is the Safety and Worker's Compensation Administrator who has been with the City in the Human Resources Department for about five months.

Ms. Abner stated she was glad to meet the Fire and Police Commissioners and be present at their meeting.

Chairman Burke stated that they were two new Commissioners attending their first meeting; Pastor Marvin Hightower and Terry Cooper, which he welcomed to the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Burke, Chairman asked for the approval of the minutes of the regular meeting of October 2, 2024.

William Spears motioned to receive and file the minutes of the regular meeting of October 2, 2024; seconded by Terry Cooper; all approved 7-0.

COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Burke read the communication and asked for the approval of the communication.

A. Letter of Commendation – Police Officer Justin Kirby

B. Request to Promote – Fire Captain Blaise Steffen to Fire Training Supervisor effective October 18, 2024

Kelly Petersen motioned to receive and file the communication as presented; seconded by William Spears; all approved 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Timeline and Recruiting Efforts

Fire Chief Shawn Sollberger passed out the Peoria Fire Department Demographic Report to the Commission which showed the following goals:

1. Enhance and market the opportunities of the Fire Department and encourage individuals to seek employment with the Peoria Fire Department.
2. Sign on bonus – Every member of the Peoria Fire Department must be, at a minimum, EMT-Basic certified. When a candidate is certified as an EMT-Basic or Paramedic, a sign on bonus will be distributed to the candidate upon hire.

3. Educational opportunities – Whether it be on the job training or college courses, the PFD strives to continue the education of their fire personnel through several means and programs. Tuition reimbursement is a benefit offered any current member seeking to further their education in Fire Science. Programs such as the Explorers and Woodruff High School program, grant those interested in Fire service, but aren't old enough, experience in the field through CPR training, first aide training, and gear training, just to name a few.
4. Keeping up with the times – Peoria Fire Department is dedicated to using innovative marketing techniques to reach those viewers through social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X are all social media platforms people view on a daily basis. By utilizing these tools and resources, the PFD will be able to reach the younger generation to create interest in the department.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they would like to expand the Apprenticeship Program from three to six Apprentices next June to help provide a career pathway for teenagers and young adults.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that the application process is open to apply to become a Firefighter and the testing will take place in May, June and July 2025.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they changed their testing process from winter to summer to see how that works.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they have increased their Firefighter Recruitment Team from seven to 15, which is the highest they have ever had and more diverse with minorities and females.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they are creating a Fitness Team that will begin on January 1, 2025, at Fire Station 17, which is located across the street from the Fire Training Academy on Galena Road.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that it is fully stocked with various types of equipment needed to be able to train applicants and it is our training facility and our staff that would be conducting the training.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they will follow the procedures of the Police Department by making telephone calls to applicants to submit the required documents, join the fitness team, etc. along with the help of Debra Bush.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that they had 17 people show up for the Firefighter Orientation Day that was held at the Fire Training Academy where they had the opportunity to put on the fire gear, meet with Firefighters and learn the ins and outs of being a Firefighter.

Fire Chief Sollberger passed the Peoria Fire Department Recruitment Sheet as follows:

September/October 2024

The fire Department has (7) applicants going through the onboard process in preparation for hiring (3) Firefighters for our February 2025 recruit class. Future vacancies in the fall of 2025 will be 4-6 due to retirements.

Community Engagement

Sound off fire prevention program in the month of October/November in all elementary schools in the City of Peoria.
Sound the Alarm smoke alarm program. Walked the streets of the Uplands for three consecutive days installed 57 smoke alarms in 16 homes.

Ride to School on a fire truck at (3) area schools

Job Fairs

Monmouth College Career Expo
Peoria High School College and Career Fair

Illinois Central College athletes career fair

Internship/Apprenticeship

Western Illinois University internship in the Fall (1) in the Spring 2025
3 Apprentices will expand to 6 in 2025
EMT-Basic and Paramedic ride alongs in our space weekly

Recruitment Committee

Social Media Engagement

Fitness Team

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that there were 20 to 21 applicants in the current pool, and they were offered the opportunity to take the free EMT class offered by the Fire Department.

Fire Chief Sollberger stated that 11 candidates took advantage of the EMT class and five are nationally registered and the others need to take the national test.

Police Sergeant Ryan Winkle went over the following Recruitment Team activities for October 2024:

14 applicants currently going through the hiring process for this test cycle for the January 2025 PTI Class. They have passed the written test, physical, polygraph, and have currently moved into the psychological and background process. There are currently 18 in the field training program and 8 in the academy.

Networking / Job Fairs / Community Events:

- Lost Art Design
- Career Sparks Civic Center
- Illinois State University
- Peoria High School
- Illinois Central College

Mentoring & Peer Support

- Intern Summer Schopp ICC
- Intern Jack Stellano – Bradley University
- Intern Alexandra Salgado – Bradley University
- Alexandria Atanasov – Illinois State University
- Peyton Yagle - ICC

Applicant Engagement:

- Physical Fitness Team – 3x/week utilizing PPD gym and Riverplex personal training facilities

The October highlight was the Central Vs Bloomington football game. This game traditionally was the annual police appreciation game. This year PPD went all out and sponsored and marketed the game including an inflatable helmet and a wrapped bus that will be in the Citylink fleet for 2 years.

Police Officer Chris Collins stated that beginning January, Officer Ciara Barker will take the place of Sergeant Ryan Winkle and Police Sergeant Scott Goforth will be retiring and the new Training Sergeant will be Brain Richards.

Police Officer Collins stated that this was why Officer Barker and Sergeant Richards attended the meeting.

Officer Collins stated that the Fire Department are always out there with them in various events, and they all work as a team, which was agreed by Fire Chief Sollberger.

Pastor Hightower stated that he has been around for a long time, and it seems like the Police and Fire Departments are not focusing on what they can't do, but what they can do, which changed the culture of what the old recruitment efforts was like under past Chiefs.

Pastor Hightower stated that these new recruitment efforts was a step in the right direction for both the Police and Fire Departments.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

William Spears moved to adjourn to Executive Session under 2c (1) of the Open Meetings Acts, seconded by Pastor Marvin Hightower; all approved 7-0.

RECONVENE TO REGULAR SESSION

NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the minutes from the Regular Meeting October 2, 2024, and they are not to be released per Attorney Perkins.

William Spears moved to approve the Executive Session minutes from the Regular Meeting October 2, 2024, per Attorney Masum Perkins; seconded by Barry Anderson; all approved 7-0.

Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the Police Recruit candidate P24-071 2nd polygraph examination, and the offer will be withdrawn due to admissions.

Mickeisha Armstrong moved to withdraw the offer of employment for Police Recruit candidate P24-071 due to admissions on the 2nd polygraph examination, seconded by William Spears; all approved 7-0.

Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the Lateral Police Recruit candidate PL24-003 psychological examination, and they will have their offer of employment withdrawn due to being found unqualified by the psychological examiner.

Mickeisha Armstrong moved to withdraw the offer of employment for Lateral Police Recruit candidate PL24-003 due to being found unqualified by the psychological examiner, seconded by Barry Anderson; all approved 7-0.

Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the Police Recruit Psychological Examinations as shown below:

P24-048	P24-060
P24-049	P24-061
P24-050	P24-062
P24-051	P24-063
P24-052	P24-064
P24-053	P24-065
P24-054	P24-066
P24-055	P24-067
P24-057	
P24-059	

Chairperson Burke stated that Police Recruit candidates P24-059, P24-063, P24-064 and P24-065 will have their offers of employment withdrawn due to being found unqualified by the psychological examiner.

Mickeisha Armstrong moved to withdraw the offers of employment for Police Recruit candidates P24-059, P24-063, P24-064 and P24-065 due to being found unqualified by the psychological examiner, seconded by Barry Anderson; all approved 7-0.

Chairperson Burke stated that Police Recruit candidates P24-048, P24-049, P24-050, P24-051, P24-052, P24-053, P24-054, P24-055, P24-057, P24-058, P24-060, P24-061, and P24-062 will continue in the process.

Chairperson Burke stated that while in Executive Session they reviewed the polygraph examination for Firefighter candidate F24-009 and they will have their offer of employment withdrawn due to deception on their polygraph, which they will have the option to re-take the polygraph at their own expense with another examiner given by the City of Peoria.

William Spears moved to withdraw the offer of employment for Firefighter candidate F24-009 due to deception with the option to re-take another polygraph at their own expense with the examiner chosen by the City of Peoria, seconded by Mickeisha Armstrong; all approved 7-0.

Chairperson Burke stated that Firefighter candidates F24-007, F24-008, F24-009, F24-010, F24-011 and F24-012 will continue in the process.

ADJOURN MEETING

There being no further business, William Spears moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Terry Cooper; all approved 7-0.

Submitted by: Debra D. Bush
Affirmative Employment Specialist

APPROVED:

Thomas Burke, Chairperson

William Spears, Vice Chairperson

Mickeisha Armstrong, Secretary

Barry Anderson, Member

Kelly Petersen, Member

Pastor Marvin Hightower

Terry Cooper, Member