

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
CITY HALL, WHEELER ROOMS A AND B  
JANUARY 9, 2024**

**MINUTES**

Vice Chairperson Hall called the regular meeting of the Civil Service Commission to order at 4:32 p.m. Present were Commissioners Dr. Ralph Ford, Captain Paul Grech, LaShea Hall; Absent: Chairperson Melva Falberg, Commissioner Richard Rodgers; Personnel Director Eric Amado; Clerk to the Commission Deborah Brelsford; City Atty. John Mitola; Atty. Thomas Bucci; Sgt. Fabio Pereira; Lt. Adam Rozum, Dennis Olmstead; Adam Heller, MZS Law: Atty. Courtney George, Atty. Heather Spaide

**CONSENT AGENDA: MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON**

- \*\* **COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO ADOPT THE CONSENT AGENDA AS FOLLOWS:**
  - **MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2023**
  - **MERIT INCREASES, PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS, VACANCY REPORT AS PRESENTED.**
- \*\* **COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**MERIT INCREASES FOR JANUARY 9, 2024 C.S.C MEETING**

<b>POLICE</b>	<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE JANUARY 25, 2024</b>
TAMARA GARCIA	POLICE OFFICER	\$69,118.00 (1) TO \$77,001.00 (2)
LUISA MERCED	POLICE OFFICER	\$69,118.00 (1) TO \$77,001.00 (2)
ADAM SALCE	POLICE OFFICER	\$69,118.00 (1) TO \$77,001.00 (2)
CHRISTOPHER MATARAZZO	POLICE OFFICER	\$69,118.00 (1) TO \$77,001.00 (2)
VICTOR RRAPI	POLICE OFFICER	\$69,118.00 (1) TO \$77,001.00 (2)

**MERIT INCREASES FOR JANUARY 9, 2024 C.S.C MEETING**

<b>FIRE</b>	<b>JOB TITLE</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 4, 2024</b>
JUSTIN BRUNYANSKY	FIRE FIGHTER	\$73,064.00 (3) TO \$77,931.00 (4) TOP

**PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS – JANUARY MEETING**

ID#	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	JOB TITLE	EFFECTIVE DATE
222058	Scianna	Craig	Steamfitter	12/22/2023
222117	Cernuch	Martin	Carpenter	12/22/2023
221971	Cromwell	Terrance	Maintainer III	12/17/2023

**VACANCIES** Report - 1/9/2024

**Competitive Positions** **Former** **Replacement**

NONE

**Non-Competitive Positions** **Former** **Replacement**

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Special Projects Coordinator	New	Derrick Patrick
Vital Records Customer Service Clerk	Nasir Gibson	Vacant

**LABOR RELATIONS**

Human Resource Generalist	Marie Tonini	Vacant
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**PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Airport Certification Specialist	Tairu Zong	Vacant
Airport Certification Specialist	New	Vacant
Maintainer IV	Gilberto Nieves	Vacant
Maintainer III	Nick Alamo	Vacant
Maintainer II	Richard Abbott	Vacant
Maintainer I Grade I	Peguy Jean	Patrick Nembhard
Site Monitor (12)	Seasonal	Vacant
Site Coordinator (8)	Seasonal	Vacant
Middle School Basketball Coordinator (6)	Seasonal	Vacant
Recreation Leader (15)	Seasonal	Vacant

**REGISTRAR OF VOTERS**

PT Clerical	Seasonal	Jowanne Burks
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*Black = competitive*

*Blue = non-competitive*

Matters to be Acted Upon

5. The Commission is asked to classify into the non-competitive division 2 new Library positions previously approved by the Commission at the November 14, 2023 meeting and the City Council on January 2, 2024.

- Library Maintenance and Facilities Manager
- Library Information Technology Services Manager

Mr. Amado reviewed the item and noted that a unanimous vote of the full Commission is needed. He requested to table this matter to a special meeting or next month's meeting.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.  
\*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\* THE MOTION TO TABLE PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**6. Appeal - Richard Sobczak**

The Commission has received a request for an appeal from Richard Sobczak regarding his disqualification from the hiring process for entry level Police Officer examination #2385 due to habits and conduct. He is represented by Attorney Thomas Bucci.

Mr. Amado asked the candidate if he wished to have the appeal heard in Executive or Public Session. Atty. Bucci requested the appeal to be held in Executive Session.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION  
FOR AN APPEAL FROM RICHARD SOBCZAK REGARDING HIS  
DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL  
POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT.  
\*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Commissioners, Mr. Amado, Ms. Brelsford, Atty. Mitola, Atty. Bucci, Mr. Sobczak, and Mr. Adam Heller entered Executive Session at 4:35 p.m. The Commission returned to Public Session at 5:02 p.m.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HALL ASKED THE COMMISSIONERS TO VOTE ON THE  
APPEAL FROM RICHARD SOBCZAK REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION  
FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER  
EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT.  
COMMISSIONER GRECH VOTED TO GRANT THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER FORD VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER HALL VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
\*\* THE APPEAL FROM RICHARD SOBCZAK REGARDING HIS  
DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL  
POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT  
WAS DENIED.**

## 7. Appeal - Santos Ortega

The Commission has received a request for an appeal from Santos Ortega regarding his disqualification from the hiring process for entry level Police Officer examination #2385 due to habits and conduct. He is represented by Attorney Thomas Bucci.

Mr. Amado asked the candidate if he wished to have the appeal heard in Executive or Public Session. Atty. Bucci requested the appeal to be held in Executive Session.

- \*\* COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR AN APPEAL FROM SANTOS ORTEGA REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT.**
- \*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Commissioners, Mr. Amado, Ms. Brelsford, Atty. Mitola, Atty. Bucci, and Mr. Ortega entered into Executive Session at 5:04 p.m. The Commission returned to Public Session at 5:34 p.m.

- \*\* COMMISSIONER HALL ASKED THE COMMISSIONERS TO VOTE ON THE APPEAL FROM SANTOS ORTEGA REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT.**
- COMMISSIONER GRECH VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.**
- COMMISSIONER FORD VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.**
- COMMISSIONER HALL VOTED TO GRANT THE APPEAL.**
- \*\* THE APPEAL FROM SANTOS ORTEGA REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FOR ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT WAS DENIED.**

## 8. Appeal - Edgar Valencia

The Commission has received a request for an appeal from Edgar Valencia regarding his disqualification from the hiring process for entry level Police Officer examination #2385 due to habits and conduct.

Mr. Amado asked the candidate if he wished to have the appeal heard in Executive or Public Session. Atty. Bucci requested the appeal to be held in Executive Session.

- \*\* COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE APPEAL FROM EDGAR VALENCIA, REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FROM THE ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Commissioners, Mr. Amado, Ms. Brelsford, and Mr. Valencia entered into Executive Session at 5:36 p.m. The Commission returned to Public Session at 5:51 p.m.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER HALL ASKED THE COMMISSIONERS TO VOTE ON THE APPEAL**

**COMMISSIONER GRECH VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER FORD VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER HALL VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.**

**\*\* THE APPEAL FROM EDGAR VALENCIA, REGARDING DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FROM THE ENTRY LEVEL POLICE OFFICER EXAMINATION #2385 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT WAS UNANIMOUSLY DENIED.**

**Item 9. Appeal Juan Jose Santos (Tabled November 14, 2023 and December 12, 2023)**

The Commission has received a request for an appeal from Juan Jose Santos, regarding his disqualification from the hiring process from the entry level Firefighter examination #2380 due to habits and conduct.

Mr. Amado referred to an email that the applicant could not make it and he was not in attendance.

**COMMISSIONER HALL ASKED THE COMMISSIONERS TO VOTE ON THE APPEAL FROM JUAN JOSE SANTOS, REGARDING HIS DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FROM THE ENTRY LEVEL FIRE FIGHTER EXAMINATION #2380 DUE TO HABITS.**

**COMMISSIONER GRECH VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER FORD VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.  
COMMISSIONER HALL VOTED TO DENY THE APPEAL.**

**\*\* THE APPEAL FROM JUAN JOSE SANTOS REGARDING DISQUALIFICATION FROM THE HIRING PROCESS FROM THE ENTRY LEVEL FIREFIGHTER EXAMINATION #2380 DUE TO HABITS AND CONDUCT WAS UNANIMOUSLY DENIED.**

**10. Complaint and appeal regarding competitive promotional exam #2384 Fire Lieutenant**

Mr. Amado asked the candidates' legal counsel, Marino, Zabel & Schellenberg if they wished to have the appeal heard in Executive or Public Session and they requested the appeal to be held in public session.

Mr. Amado introduced the item and reviewed an email regarding the complaint from Candidates as listed: Christopher Burkett, James McMahon, Max Eastus, Kraig Moran, Kevin Scranton, and Eric Spooner.

Personnel Director Eric Amado referenced Exhibits as an email from Firefighter Dennis Olmstead asking what his options were for taking the Fire Lieutenant exam because his wife was in labor. He further referenced an email from Industrial Organizational Solutions consultants regarding the written exam and an unpreventable emergency matter, best practices and the psychometric probability of a candidate being able to memorize all the questions on an exam. In addition, all candidates sign a confidentiality agreement prohibiting them from communicating about the examination. Eric explained that the Civil Service Commission is the only authority to create and establish rules. Additionally, Eric said there was correspondence from a firefighter, name redacted, that he was made aware of the complaint and the situation in its entirety by other firefighters, but he did not lodge a complaint.

Eric Amado further explained that Civil Service sent an email to Fire LT candidates because of a practice instituted years ago so there would not be an unfair advantage to individuals asking the most questions. It was decided to include all candidates in the correspondence. Eric referenced an email from 2020. The claim that Civil Service censored the individual is not correct. If any candidate disagrees with the Personnel Director regarding an act of God, that the candidate should have prioritized better, in accordance with Civil Service rules a formal request for a complaint and directions on how to provide the complaint and the parameters of when this should be done were provided. There are copies of the complaint also. He further explained that the test consultant was asked about the appropriateness of giving the exam to a candidate after the other candidates took the exam was acceptable in this special situation. The test consultant said it was. Eric referenced the somewhat new Pregnant Worker's Fairness Act and the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). The language neglects to use "he or she" and the Act would not be limited to the pregnant worker only. He added that the Personnel Director has the authority to make the decision to allow a candidate to test after the exam is given. He did this because of a very special situation that the candidate could not schedule for and should have the right to sit for the exam.

Attorney Courtney George stated which of the complainants were present and absent. She explained that exhibits were submitted in advance and added that additional exhibits, identified as Amended Exhibit List 7-12, were passed out to the Commission. She claimed the Personnel Director's and Personnel Examiner's comments constituted interference with the candidates' right to engage in protected activity to seek compliance with Civil Service. In the email were hostile comments that were the cause of wrongful retaliation, hostility, and harassment in the workplace. She stated the complainants were seeking enforcement and compliance with Civil Service rules and charter provisions concerning the administration of competitive promotional exams including this exam, public retraction of defamatory statements by the Personnel Director and the Personnel Examiner, investigation of the retaliation and harassment directed at the complainants and protection from interference, retaliation and harassment, the disqualification of the unauthorized makeup exam and removal of the disqualified candidate from the exam promotional list.

She continued that the public was not noticed in advance nor correctly and does not constitute compliance with the Commissions' own rules. Attorney George referenced the City Charter, Civil Service Commission Rules and General Statutes. She also referenced the Civil Service Lieutenant exam #2384 announcement and footnote and said the only accommodation was a waiver of payroll deduction if there was hardship and there were no options in the notice for a make-up. It is her contention that all have the right to know and seek any accommodation, make-up and what the grounds would be.

Attorney George stressed that the notice in the language was clear, not ambiguous, and that even late arrivals would not be admitted.

Attorney George stated an example dated September 8, 2020, for exam #2362, of a practice to respond to all candidates. The communication was from Lisa Mastronunzio, Personnel Examiner and it was to the full roster of exam candidates.

By comparison, Attorney George stated the October 27, 2023 email that was exclusively to 6 individuals and the others must have been blind copied. This email in this form singled out and identified 6 candidates and disclosed them to the full group of exam candidates. She said that when looking at the content of the response from the Personnel Director and Personnel Examiner it engages in personal attacks on individuals and disparagement of the individuals who bring complaints.

She read from the top of page 2 that the members were deceitful, showed unbecoming conduct, lacked virtue, and did not have "fitness to serve" of those who brought the complaints.

She said from page 3 that recent behavior regarding a life circumstance is "appalling" and conduct unbecoming of a fraternal organization. She continued reading that some should take time to reflect on what "brotherhood" means in a service oriented professional organization such as the Bridgeport Fire Department.

Attorney George said these statements are objectionable and defamatory because it goes to the professional reputations and standing of the individuals to serve in their careers as firefighters.

Attorney George wanted to afford some of the candidates to speak. Attorney Mitola said her presentation was excellent but already 20 minutes long and asked Attorney George to wrap up her presentation and she said she would. She said the group didn't want other candidates to be deterred from bringing forth future complaints.

Attorney George pointed out hostile comments, taunting of the individuals for bringing the complaints and that there was direct hostile activity to candidates in the workplace.

She referenced an exhibit that showed stickers that said BFD BMA Brotherhood and said in their view was intended to be disparaging.

Attorney Spaide referenced Exhibit 2D, as an example of anonymous texts sent to Max Eastus. Attorney George didn't repeat the curse language.

Attorney Mitola questioned her about the email singling out complainants and no one would have known about the complaints that were filed. She responded she could not answer his question because it would be speculation. She added it was clear that the response document was circulated to all. Attorney Mitola said the first part of the arguments are cogent regarding the charter and the Commission should look at it.

Attorney George stated there has been no effort to investigate. Attorney Mitola asked if the complainants filed complaints with their supervisors and the Labor Relations office. He added if they did this there could be an investigation. Attorney George said Counsel was on the correspondence.

Attorney George discussed the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. She claimed the statute and EEOC language made it very clear that the accommodation is for the pregnant worker only and no spouse or family member.

Commissioner Paul Grech questioned Attorney Mitola who stated that the law is to strictly follow the charter. Attorney Mitola said the Commission asked for a legal opinion in writing. Commissioner Grech added that whatever ruling comes down affects multiple tests and we have a lot of tests.

Attorney Mitola asked Attorney George to submit her presentation to him in writing. He added that both she and Personnel Director Amado made good points. He needs to look at everything.

Attorney George said the notice needs to be clear and it would avoid the problems that the Civil Service was intended to prevent. CS is supposed to provide clear, trustworthy, and uniform procedures to be followed.

There was a discussion about what rank the candidate was and that the complainants were calling to be disqualified. It was answered that he is ranked 16 preliminarily. There are appeals being reviewed by the test consultant.

Fire Chief Lance Edwards said there are 10 vacancies for Fire Lieutenant.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FORD MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM COMPLAINT AND APPEAL REGARDING COMPETITIVE PROMOTIONAL EXAM #2384 FIRE LIEUTENANT.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* MOTION TO TABLE PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Item 11. Legal Report – No report

## **Item 12. Personnel Director Report**

Personnel Director Amado highlighted the following reports for information:

- Exam Update

City of Bridgeport  
Civil Service Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
January 9, 2024

Pre-employment vetting is in process for police officer candidates.  
Processing Public Safety Communicators, pre-employment screenings for Fire.  
Received City Council approval of update of job description for Purchasing Agent.  
Looking into finalizing results for Assistant Police Chief Exam.  
Doing other processing of exams for non-competitive classifications.

The next regular monthly CSC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

There may be a virtual special meeting virtually for the Library classification of two new positions that requires a unanimous vote on item one from this agenda from this Commission, as these are time sensitive. City Council and Miscellaneous Matters Committee have approved the new positions.

Chief Porter is reviewing a plan for hiring lateral officers. This will be consistent with how other towns hire lateral transfers. There has also been a meeting with Communications and the Mayor's Office about lateral transfers.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GRECH MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER FORD SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Telesco Secretarial Services