

SOLON CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
February 24, 2011 – 6:38 p.m.

The Solon Civil Service Commission met at Solon City Hall.

PRESENT: Commission Members Doberstyn, Huml, and Patton, Human Resource Director Cornhoff, Firefighter Jim Nix, Firefighter Scott Altshuler, Secretary Perry

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Doberstyn moved to approve the minutes of February 8, 2011 as prepared and submitted by Secretary Perry. Mr. Patton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Aye: Doberstyn, Huml, Patton
 Nay: None The Motion Carried

APPROVAL OF PAYROLL

Mr. Doberstyn moved to approve the Hourly/Salary Payroll for Pay End Date February 11, 2011 as prepared and submitted by the Payroll Department. Mr. Huml seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Aye: Doberstyn, Huml, Patton
 Nay: None The Motion Carried

Mr. Doberstyn moved to approve the Hourly/Salary Payroll for Pay End Date February 25, 2011 as prepared and submitted by the Payroll Department. Mr. Huml seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Aye: Doberstyn, Huml, Patton
 Nay: None The Motion Carried

REVIEW OF PAYROLL CHANGE/RATE SHEETS

The Commission reviewed and signed the available payroll change/rate sheets provided by the Payroll Department. No action was taken by the Commission.

REVIEW OF BUDGET

The report for the Month Ending January 31, 2011 was reviewed. No action was taken by the Commission.

CORRESPONDENCE

A Memorandum was received from Mayor Drucker promoting Detective David Perchinske to the rank of Sergeant.

A letter was received from the Director of Human Resources to Joan Milhoan terminating her employment with the Engineering Department effective February 10, 2011.

A letter was received from Joan Milhoan formally requesting a hearing to appeal her termination.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Director Cornhoff introduced Firefighter Jim Nix and Firefighter Scott Altshuler who were present to discuss the credit for evaluations in the promotional examination process.

Mr. Nix said evaluations were discussed during the last contract negotiations where they asked that evaluations not be used in the promotional process because of the complaints received over numerous years. He explained the evaluation system which has a score of one to five in each category. The problem is there isn't any grading criteria constituting how an employee obtains their score; it is totally subjective.

He gave an example of how one Shift Officer might evaluate an employee five for showing up on-time on a daily basis, but another Shift Officer would only evaluate that same employee three because the employee is *expected* to show up on-time on a daily basis. He said there are nine Shift Officers evaluating groups of four.

Mr. Nix noted his standing on the current promotional examination is fifth out of eight. At the time of the exam he was dealing with contract negotiations and read the material six days before taking the exam. He understands his arguments tonight might affect his standing.

Last year Mr. Nix worked January through June in the Fire Prevention Bureau with Lt. Al Benedict. He was then transferred to A Shift to fill the position of Acting Lieutenant for Lt. Charles Taylor, serving six months in that capacity. He was then re-assigned to C Shift. His evaluation for that year was performed by a Lieutenant who he only worked with a hand-full of times. He said that particular evaluation could have impacted his future career path.

Mr. Nix explained a recent incident where an e-mail was sent to the Shift Officers asking them to prepare their 2010 evaluations and turn them directly into the Chief. He said many of the officers were never afforded the opportunity to review their scores before the evaluations were used in the promotional process. He said evaluations are subjective but part of the normal process is being able to explain yourself; maybe that would have changed the score.

Another issue is that C Shift did not have a Battalion Chief for the last part of 2010 leaving no one to oversee the Lieutenants who prepared the evaluations. That impacted the Officers as well as the firefighters. He is not accusing any Officer of wrong doing, but when there is human factor involved there is a chance for human error. C Shift did not get the guidelines of protection that the remaining two shifts were afforded.

Mr. Nix explained that in 2008 and 2009 he was given almost identical language in his evaluations by two different Officers but there was an eight point difference in scores. Mr. Nix said he fully believes in the evaluation process. If it is noticed that a firefighter is not up to date on his ventilation skills it should be noted and the firefighter should be educated in that practice. The firefighters just do not want the evaluations used in the promotional process.

Mr. Altshuler said he believes the evaluations could be used in a different manner. If the Written test and the Oral Board of two or three candidates are extremely close, this is where the evaluations might be used. The Chief, Assistant Chief and the Director of Human Resources would use them to determine which of the two or three candidates is a better fit as to what they are seeking in that position since all the candidates are well qualified. The evaluation system, because it is so subjective, should not be a basis towards the percentage of the scores. Mr. Huml replied that if the evaluations were used in that manner, it would add a whole other level of subjectivity to the equation. Mr. Altshuler said he understood, but it would only be used when there are candidates who are equally qualified.

Mr. Doberstyn asked if a personality conflict could affect an evaluation. Mr. Nix and Mr. Altshuler both said yes.

Another portion of the evaluation they would like removed is allowing credit for service time in another municipality in other capacities. Why should that be permitted as credit towards

advancement in this municipality. Why not just allow credit for time served as a Solon firefighter. Mr. Nix acknowledged that he would lose eight years credit as a Solon police officer if that rule were to change.

Mr. Altshuler asked if some of the firefighters were to sit down with the Chief, Assistant Chief, Human Resource Director and possibly a Union Representative to come up with better processes that still fall within the Civil Service Laws, would the Commission be open to discussion. Mr. Huml said the Civil Service Commission is in place to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and that the processes be open to beyond the immediate family. They are based on equity and fairness.

Mr. Patton said Mr. Nix and Mr. Altshuler did an excellent job in presenting their arguments to the Commission. He thinks there are some legitimate concerns with subjectivity. He agrees there should be some commonality among the officers conducting the evaluations. He said the City of Solon is a great community because of its employees and many times those employees do have legitimate concerns with the way departments are run. The example used of giving a three or a five for attendance is where the gold badges should come together in agreement as to how to equally evaluate the employees. Mr. Nix said he believes the Chief is now working with the gold badges to develop a new system; hopefully this discussion will not have to take place again. But for this promotional examination, because of the discrepancies among the shifts, and because many of the candidates were not given the opportunity to sit-down with their evaluator, it is their request that the evaluations not be included in the scoring of this promotional examination.

Mr. Doberstyn said he has had some experience with these types of evaluations and recalls a question being brought up with regards to attendance. The Police Department chose to eliminate options four and five. He supports Mr. Nix and Mr. Altshuler 100% and acknowledged subjectivity has always been a problem within the evaluation process. He respects them for bringing this issue forward and believes the issue should be reviewed.

Director Cornhoff said he has been performing evaluations for over 30 years and that subjectivity always comes into play. He said they recently received all the evaluations for the Departments within the City and noticed some Directors are extremely generous within their evaluations and others are not. Director Cornhoff further stated that under the Patton Administration the evaluators were given extensive training, but, even during that time there were discrepancies in the evaluation process. He said he understands the arguments presented this evening, but, has a concern about the changing rules after everyone has taken the examination and felt that these concerns should have been brought to the Commission prior to the written test being given. However, Director Cornhoff agreed that there were some extenuating circumstances that occurred in the Fire Department this year that do warrant consideration by the Commission to amend the evaluation portion of the exam. He felt that some of the other items mentioned by the Fire Department representatives should be addressed at future Labor/Management meetings with the Firefighters and Administration and then brought back to the Commission with recommendations that pertain to civil service. Director Cornhoff also noted that he did not know how the other six candidates who passed the test feel on this matter and it would be difficult to make a decision without that. Mr. Nix said he told candidates number two and three to not attend the meeting this evening because they are already in line for promotion and it would not be in their best interest. Mr. Nix said he personally had nothing to gain by this recommendation and that it actually could hurt his ranking.

Following further discussion, Mr. Nix and Mr. Altshuler thanked the Commission for their time.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Director Cornhoff addressed the appeal of termination by Joan Milhoan. He provided the Commission with the procedures per the Rules and Regulations. The Commission requested that the Secretary send a letter to Ms. Milhoan inviting her to attend the March 8 meeting.

Mr. Doberstyn moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. Mr. Patton seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Aye: Doberstyn, Huml, Patton
 Nay: None The Motion Carried

