

Minutes of Monday, December 11, 2017, 6:00 PM

Present:

Patrick Hare – District 5
George Cortes – District 2
Greta Kenney – District 5
Aivi Nguyen – District 1
Shirley Konneh – District 3
Florette Willis – District 4

Absent:

Kathleen Rentsch- District 1

Staff:

Pamela Callahan, Human Resources

Guests:

Mr. Richard Fiske, Director Emergency Communications

1. The meeting was officially called to order at 6:02 PM. Greta Kenney welcomed all.
2. The Chairperson called for a motion to approve minutes on 11/13/17. On a motion by George Cortes and seconded by Florette Willis, the minutes were approved with the inclusion of the following amendment on the minutes: a correction on the spelling of the last name “Koneh” to “Konneh”. No members were opposed.
3. Mr. Richard Fiske, Director Emergency Communications, gave a brief overview of the City of Worcester public safety agency, which encompasses Police, Fire, Emergency Communication, Emergency Management, and EMS and the populations they serve, which includes Worcester and Leicester.

Mr. Fiske explained that due to a high level of responsibility and stress, with low pay and low rest time, there is a high turnover for positions in 911 Emergency. He stated that there is a struggle to recruit, hire and retain high-quality, trained, certified, and competent employees for the positions in the agency. These positions require a development of a unique skillset, he explained.

Mr. Fiske explained the recruitment process as well as the hiring process of the agency, which includes a computer-based multi-tasking aptitude test that is required and timed. The agency follows the standard hiring process of the City of Worcester initially, and recruits through various methods, including social media, city website, mass email, cable television, etc. The second part of the hiring process is the multi-tasking aptitude test, that is required of all candidates, and anyone who doesn't score an 80 or better, doesn't move on in the process. Typing, reading comprehension, memory retention, etc. are among the areas that are tested. Everyone that passes the test gets an interview. Mr. Fiske explained that the agency worked with the previous Chief Diversity Officer on updating their interview process and keeping it standardized for each candidate. Final selection of candidates goes through many phases, due to the type of position, and that the performance in the role is very important. Mr. Fiske voiced the concern for confidence and trust in performance of every employee, which is a matter of life and death in this field of work.

Once a final candidate is hired, the retention aspect is a concern in this field of work. It is a union position, and all parties (management and employee) must comply with terms of the contract. It is important to retain an employee once they are hired, and steps have been made to ensure this. A system called Guardian was put into place to boost morale among employees, where any employee can use this system to praise their peers and the recognition ultimately ends up in the employee's personnel file. Also, National Communicator's Week is celebrated by the agency, and the employees are recognized for their position during this week-long celebration. In addition, a state-of-art facility, was purposely built for employees in this line of work, and includes new chairs, radios, phones, breakroom, etc. The City and the union have been working on a Union agreement that will increase the pay scale for Emergency Dispatchers that will make the position more competitive and so that they no longer lose these positions to other cities and towns. Mr. Fiske says the agency spends the time and effort to certify and develop these positions, only to lose them to other agencies.

As far as the Diversity and Inclusion aspect of the process, Mr. Fiske says the agency can use help in outreach to the community. The main focus, he says, is for the candidate to be qualified and be able to pass the test. All candidates need to possess the basic skillset required of the job, and they need to be able to communicate

effectively, work through any language barriers, and work effectively with Interpreter Services.

Mr. Fiske then explained the formal, structured training process. Once the final candidate is hired for the position, there is a formal, structured training process. The employee goes through a Daily Observation Report (DOR), and is paired with a Certified Training Official (CTO) that helps train them, which comes from a rank-structure, within the organization.

Shirley Konneh asked about the potential job growth or defined career path for this position, and pay grade for the entry level position. Mr. Fiske explained the different levels and steps of positions. The first level is Regional Dispatcher I, which is meant to be a training position where the employee only answers inbound calls while in training and starts at \$19.18 per hour. The next level is Regional Dispatcher II, where the employee has completed all four phases of training and has tested out of each phase through the Training Coordinator. Regional Dispatcher II is a higher pay grade and the employee is obligated to stay in the position for three years, by contract. In order to be eligible for the next step Regional Dispatcher III, the employee has to exhibit leadership on the shift and perform all functions of a dispatcher at a superior competency level. The next step is a Trainer, which includes a week of CTO School, an additional pay scale and pay grade, and supervisory opportunities. The next step is Senior Regional Dispatcher II, which is a shift supervisor. Senior Regional Dispatcher III, is the following step and the top of the career path of Communications.

Greta Kenney asked Mr. Fiske if the agency collects demographic data on prospective employees, and if this data represents the demographic of the City. Greta mentioned that the purpose of her question is to connect with and tap into the communities that are not represented, in regard to outreach for employment. Mr. Fiske responded that they don't have that type of data, only what is within the application. He informed the group of his knowledge of the demographics of employment. Of the 57 total employees and 3 per diem, 20 are male and 40 are female. Among these positions, there are 9 CTO supervisors that are male and 10 that are female. Among the upper management, 1 is male and 2 are female. The demographics also include 52 white, 0 black, 4 Hispanic, and 1 Asian (other).

From these demographic details, Mr. Fiske pointed out that this data is not representative of the City of the Worcester demographic, but is representative of the applicant pool (who is applying). He asked for recommendations on who to better to reach out to, and how to do better outreach. George Cortes responded with recommendations to these two points 1) under-representation of the City of Worcester demographic and 2) better outreach methods. Mr. Cortes recommended the agency to create or have a list of under-represented or minority groups, and to take an extra step in recruitment with these groups. Mr. Cortes also recommended this agency to partner with Police and Fire departments during their recruitment events, initiatives, and programs.

Mr. Cortes also asked Mr. Fiske about his recruitment officer or team, to which Mr. Fiske responded that his upper management participates in recruitment, alongside Human Resources. Mr. Fiske mentioned the Open House that his agency participated in, which was a huge undertaking, and employees were hired from it. Mr. Cortes recommended the agency make direct contact with particular agencies to inform them about open positions. Mr. Cortes also recommended removing “artificial barriers” during interviewing and testing.

Florette Willis recommended providing trainings to the communities of Worcester, including high schools, colleges, and universities, to help prospective employees prepare.

AiVi Nguyen asked Mr. Fiske the demographic that he has specifically interviewed, and if he has interviewed black people. Mr. Fiske said he has, but not many have applied which was surprising to him. He and his team have done outreach at a church, that targeted a specific demographic, but not many applied from that demographic. He asked for help in doing better outreach to under-represented groups. AiVi then asked a follow-up question about how the applicants that apply are tracked and their reasoning for applying are tracked. Mr. Fiske said that the questions he always asks include: 1) What do you know about the Emergency Communications Department and 2) How did you hear about this position. AiVi also asked about the age demographic, and Mr. Fiske said that there is a broad range of ages that apply.

Mr. Cortes asked Human Resources if they are conducting diversity trainings, including cultural competency trainings with hiring managers, so they are better able to interview individuals from different cultural groups. Pam Callahan, staff liaison from Human Resources, responded that Dr. Carter, the previous Chief Diversity officer, did such trainings, including “Cultural Norms” trainings with hiring managers, but HR can certainly use the help from this board in recommendations to this aspect.

Florette Willis asked if there were any employees in the department with disabilities. Mr. Fiske responded that there were not any employees with physical disabilities currently, but he wants to do extended outreach and cast a wider net to under-represented demographics. Florette recommended alerting Mass Rehab Commission when there are open positions.

Patrick Hare recommended reaching out to high schools and colleges/universities, especially with EMS programs. Mr. Fiske says he wants to prevent a “revolving door outlook”, but is looking for commitment to this position and career path. Patrick recommended partnering with QCC to create training/certificate programs, to bridge the gap with under-represented groups in the community and create career paths for them. Mr. Fiske says he is open to working with high schools and colleges/universities on this, but is concerned about the level of interest and finding the individuals that would be interested in these training or certificate programs.

Greta Kenney asked for final statements to wrap up the discussion. Greta asked Mr. Fiske for concrete ways the committee can partner with the agency. Mr. Fiske asked for help primarily with outreach and recruitment, and making sure the “net is larger” not just in the city but also in the region.

4. **Sub-Committee Updates**

Mr. Patrick Hare was given the floor to discuss the updates from the sub-committee meeting. Based on the original Affirmative Action Policy (about 70 pages), the committee members were asked to submit their notes and recommendations via track changes to the document. At the last sub-committee meeting all track changes were accepted and compiled into a new document, but that document is not finalized. The hope is that at the next Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting, there will be a second version ready to be submitted to the City Manager. Patrick advised

any members that want to submit further comments to submit by Friday, December 22nd 2017, 5 pm. Patrick informed the committee that resources from the state level and from universities and colleges around the state were used in creating the document. He also presented the question to the group on whether to name the document a policy or a plan. The Affirmative Action Policy subcommittee set out to make the document as expansive and inclusive as possible.

5. **Sub-Committee for Hiring/Retention Manual**

Greta Kenney proposed sub-committee members for the Sub-Committee for Hiring/Retention Manual, and these members included Shirley Konneh and Aivi Nguyen. Shirley Konneh and Aivi Nguyen both accepted, with Greta Kenney accepting as ex officio. Patrick stated that several pages (about 20 pages) were cut from the original Affirmative Action Policy document, since these pages focused on hiring and retention. The goal is to forward these pages along to the Sub-Committee for Hiring/Retention Manual that has been newly formed.

6. **Announcements:**

- **January 2018 Outreach Opportunities:**
 - City of Worcester Opportunity Fair to be held on 1/17/2018 at the First Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 5 Chestnut St.
- **Next Firefighter Exam is 3/24/18.** Application deadline 2/7/2018
- **April 11-13th 2018:** MA Fair Housing and Civil Rights Conference

7. The Meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM

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