

Police Reform Recruitment Working Group
Meeting Minutes
September 1, 2020

Mayor Whaley and Judge Parker convened the meeting.

Aaron Primm went over expectations for the conversation.

Dianne Perkins gave a presentation on the testing process, including the “written test” that is formally known as the Entry Level Assessment Test

- Presentation is available at <https://www.daytonohio.gov/898/Recruitment-Promotion>

Testing process was revised after 2013. Since there have been very high passage rates, but low percentages of applicants that show up for the test.

In 2017, switched to do the preliminary physical fitness test first to save time and money due to no-shows. Dayton may be the only city that does it that way.

- The test times may be a barrier to people attending. Natasha Spears asked about using alternative facilities to conduct the test. Civil Service has reached out to all three universities in town, but have had trouble securing the space because they need it for two full weeks.
- It worked OK when they were doing the test outside, but now the timing of the test means it often needs to be indoors.
- Several people asked questions about training sessions for the physical fitness test.

William Gillespie suggested that the inputs are a bigger issue than the process itself. Recruitment needs to be more than advertisement. The recruitment and pre-employment (civil service) processes are too disjointed. Could testing occur onsite in the community? Does it need to occur formally where people actually have to show up to a site?

Ellis Jacobs asked for more information about the test itself. How is the test scored? What goes into writing the questions? Why is the test so determinative?

- Testing consultants available for listening session in the next few weeks can explain the nitty-gritty of the test itself.
- Ken Thomas suggested that the test is so determinative because of the consent decree.

Chrisondra Goodwine asked if there was any coaching or mentorship to encourage applicants to actually show up at the testing activities. She suggested that police and Civil Service consider how to do follow up, that the people doing the recruiting coach people through the entire pre-employment process so they are more likely to show up.

Dianne Perkins continued her presentation. Two weeks after the written test, CS receives the results from the testing consultant. The top candidates immediately go into the background check process based on their test score.

Then is where the lag really occurs – there is an 8 week period between the background check and the next step. Backgrounds include database searches and polygraph examination.

Ken Thomas, DPD Command Staff, and the Law Department all review the background check information without any race or gender identifiers. Auto-disqualifiers (misdemeanor domestic violence convictions, and felony convictions) are thrown out immediately.

Someone who “fails” the background check may not have had something problematic in their history, they may have just no-showed the polygraph.

Polygraphs are conducted internally by a DPD detective. Det. Geiger joined the call and mentioned that he is now the only person conducting polygraphs – there used to be two polygraphists who would work together.

- Polygraphists receive info from the background check and use that to formulate questions. For example, a DPD recruit’s background check only revealed dates of employment at a previous job because of an NDA. In the polygraph, the recruit revealed that the NDA was in place because they had been embezzling from their previous employer.
- Use a “directed lie screening test,” which is a relatively new technique. DPD was the first department in the region to adopt this in 2013.
- All applicants go through the same background packet, and are asked the same 6 question categories as derived from the background.
- Polygraphist reports if they believe there was “significant deception”. DPD Command, Civil Service, and Law then use that information to determine what to do with the candidate.

Natasha Spears asked if there were other identifiers in the packets that go to the decision-makers’ table that could be used to reveal race or gender. Civil Service said that their educational backgrounds are included, which in some circumstances could reveal race or gender.

Cornell Trammell asked if the polygraphist could intentionally throw someone off with a cough or with a shocking question. Detective Geiger said no.

Chrisondra Goodwine asked for the demographics of the polygraphists and others involved in the background investigations. Det. Geiger is a white male. There are two white males that wrote the civil service test (Dr. Yesko and Dr. Sherbaum). Ofc. Brittany Brown, a white female, does background investigations. Chris suggested that black applicants could respond differently when asked questions by white people in positions of authority.

Chrisondra also asked about the demographic make up of the table that makes the final decisions.

- Civil Service staff at the table includes a white male, two black females, and a white female
- Law staff is a black female
- DPD staff is a white male and black male

Aaron Primm read Travis Dunnington’s comment in the chat about how polygraphs are easy to cheat and that there is substantial information online that is marketed at police recruits about how to pass.

Det. Geiger said that it was difficult to become a polygraphist and achieve the certification. They are hoping that the next person who goes through the certification process is not a white male.

Dianne Perkins continued her presentation. The second physical fitness test occurs after the background check process. This test is an OPOTA requirement. There are low failure rates.

Psychological evaluation is the next step. This usually occurs a few days after the physical fitness test. Candidates initially do the assessments and then do the psychological interview.

- MMPI is the standard assessment for the industry

Psychologist submits his recommendations and Civil Service goes by that alone.

- Dr. Berman, the psychologist on contract, will be available for a listening session.

Final step is the medical examination. There is a very strict vision standard. And recently the city added in the tobacco-free requirement.

Travis Dunnington asked about the high proportion of non-white male candidates that failed the background check. Dianne was going to do additional breakdowns to see why those candidates failed – could be no-shows, etc.

Susan Souther asked if an expunged conviction would kick someone out of the process. Particularly for a juvenile conviction. Civil Service will discount a juvenile conviction, but they do collect the information. Susan also asked if they look at social media accounts.

Officer Brown explained the background check process in more detail.

- The applicant fills out the worksheet (linked to on this page) with their criminal history
- Juvenile expungements are not looked into
- If there is other previous criminal history, Ofc. Brown will seek out additional records to find out more and will then interview the candidate about it. She will ask the candidate for their authority to get additional police records about the incident. Candidates will always sign the authority.
- If more information is revealed in the polygraph, they will then seek additional police reports based on that.
- Social media is sometimes looked at as well.

There is an additional step for LEAD certification, which is called the OTIS process.

Reverend Fox asked for longer term information about who applies and who enters the Academy. Civil Service and HR were going to work together to produce that.

Deborah Howard asked if Civil Service was asking applicants about their barriers.

- Civil Service has reached out to ask people why they don't show up at points in the process. The biggest issue is the time that things are offered.
- There is also a distinction between getting pulled and dropping out.

Judge Parker asked about why the particular physical fitness aspects were measured. Civil Service said that these were OPOTA requirements, even if they are not necessarily what is most necessary to do the job. The mayor suggested that the group could advocate to the state to make changes to these requirements.

- The military has realigned their physical fitness requirements to align with real-world skills

Travis Dunnington suggested that we need to do what we can to help people pass the test. And to convey a general attitude that we want people to pass.

In 2013, Civil Service began posting a suggested regimen in get in shape for the physical fitness test.

Dianne has been considering other ways to help prep candidates on all fronts.

Natasha Spears suggested intentionality – how to ensure that people with different backgrounds have the same chances of success. Equality does not equal equity.