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CITY OF OAKLAND
AGENDA REPORT

TO: Office of the City Administrator
FROM: Department of Human Resources Management
DATE: December 13, 2011

RE: Informational Report and Action on the Staffing Plan for Firefighters and Paramedics for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 and Information on the Candidate Physical Ability Test to be Used for Those and Future Recruitments

SUMMARY

Recruitment efforts for Firefighter Paramedics are underway. At the time this report was written, a job announcement was scheduled to be posted on December 16, 2011, closing on January 13, 2012. It is anticipated that appointments resulting from the eligible list created by this recruitment will be made in April 2012 following oral interviews by subject matter experts, comprehensive background checks, and Fire Department interviews.

The planning for the Firefighter Paramedic recruitment began early in 2011 and included a re-evaluation of the physical ability test used in the past, research into other physical ability tests available, selection of a new test to be used, implementation of a transportability study of the test recommended by staff, and negotiation of a contract to use the new test, known as CPAT (Candidate Physical Ability Test). Beginning with the current Firefighter Paramedic recruitment, the City will be using the CPAT test for its Firefighter and Firefighter Paramedic exams.

Planning is currently in process for an entry-level Firefighter recruitment with a target academy start date of September 2012.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are eighty-five (85) budgeted Firefighter Paramedic positions and the Fire Department intends to fill eight to twelve (8-12) vacancies once the eligible list is established from this recruitment.

The contract to conduct the transportability study of the CPAT cost \$12,000 and the expenditure was charged to the General Purpose Fund (1010), the Fire Department Human Resources Organization (20811), Contract Service Account (54919), Public Safety Program (PS16). Under the negotiated agreement with the California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee, there is no cost to the City to contract to accept the CPAT certification; candidates either pay to obtain CPAT certification (\$150 for two orientations and a test, plus \$25 for additional practice tests, if desired), or they can apply for financial assistance through available scholarships or grants.

Item: _____
Public Safety Committee
December 13, 2011

BACKGROUND

A recruitment for Firefighter Paramedics was last completed in 2007. The classification of Firefighter Paramedic is a promotional rank and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 55 requires that before an external recruitment can be conducted for Firefighter Paramedic, the Department must offer the opportunity for Firefighters to be promoted internally. This year, the classification specification for Firefighter Paramedic was revised to include the rank in the City's flexible staffing policy, which allows the department to promote internal candidates who meet the criteria and have obtained the necessary certifications without the employees having to participate in a competitive examination process. Fire Department management issued a memo in December 2010 offering the opportunity to promote internally and there were no qualified candidates who expressed interest at the time.

Another requirement of the exam process is that it must be periodically validated – usually within five years of the last validation. The evaluation of the test's validity is known as a “transportability study” and includes analysis of such things as the relevance of the test components to the job duties, the effectiveness of each element in testing for certain abilities, and an assessment of adverse impacts for under-represented candidate groups such as ethnic minorities and women.

The California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) is co-sponsored by the Office of the California State Fire Marshal and the California Professional Firefighters, AFL-CIO. This group has developed a physical ability test known as the CPAT (Candidate Physical Ability Test). As part of recent negotiations with IAFF Local 55, the City had agreed to use CPAT in its Fire exams beginning in 2012 following a transportability study. Because the City's ability test had not been evaluated since 2003 and there was agreement to evaluate CPAT for 2012 exams, staff from the Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) and the Fire Department agreed that it would be best to research physical ability testing options, including CPAT, for the 2011 Firefighter Paramedic exam.

From March through August 2011, staff from both DHRM and Fire assisted with research into the different options available and the standards being used across California both in the Bay Area and statewide. The research included site visits to testing facilities, discussions with other fire departments using the test, data-gathering on the adverse impacts analysis related to different testing options, and comparisons of the different testing options to the City's existing test. The research revealed that the CPAT was becoming the industry standard in the state and the test was potentially a good fit with Oakland's needs. There are currently more than 130 California fire departments that accept the CPAT, including the cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles.

In August 2011, DHRM and the Fire Department agreed to move to using the CPAT for the Firefighter Paramedic exam and future Fire exams. Staff issued a Request for Proposals, selected the most responsible bid, and initiated a contract to have a transportability study conducted of CPAT while simultaneously entering into discussions with JAC to develop and negotiate a potential contract for the City to begin using the CPAT in its Fire exams. At the time of this

writing, the City has received the preliminary results of the transportability study which show that the test is appropriate for Oakland's needs and the contract with JAC allowing the City to use the CPAT has been finalized.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Recruitment efforts for Firefighter Paramedics are underway. At the time this report was written, a job announcement was scheduled to be posted on December 16, 2011, closing on January 13, 2012. It is anticipated that appointments resulting from the eligible list created by this recruitment will be made in April 2012 following oral interviews by subject matter experts, comprehensive background checks, and Fire Department interviews.

The planning for the Firefighter Paramedic recruitment began early in 2011. The need to evaluate the physical ability testing methods for the Firefighter Paramedic exam and the subsequent research and negotiations caused a significant delay in the implementation of the recruitment process. Although this particular recruitment was delayed, the efforts made this year to improve and streamline the physical ability testing process will result in a much faster recruitment process for both Firefighter Paramedics and entry level Firefighters in the future.

The shift to using the CPAT test offers several advantages to both candidates applying for Firefighter and Firefighter Paramedic positions and to the City. For candidates, the availability of practice sites (the local sites are in Livermore and Sacramento) allows them the opportunity to prepare for and take the test as often as they may need to in order to pass the test and obtain certification. Under the City's previous system, candidates had one opportunity only to take the test per recruitment. If they failed or were unable to take the test when it was scheduled, they missed the opportunity for that recruitment. Additionally, obtaining a widely accepted certification means that candidates who succeed are eligible to participate in recruitments for many different fire departments throughout the state, thereby increasing their marketability as candidates.

The advantages for the City include: reduced staffing time and costs to run the physical ability test, shorter recruitment timeframes by eliminating a City-run test and requiring that candidates possess CPAT certification before they are hired, and using a test that is widely accepted and has been endorsed by both the state fire agency and fire fighter unions. In moving to a broadly endorsed test, the City also reduces its risk of having the test challenged.

The disadvantages to using the CPAT are that it shifts the cost burden to the candidates and the test sites are not easily accessible by public transportation. For two orientations and a test, the cost is \$150; additional practice sessions are also available for \$25 each. The cost to low income candidates can be mitigated by the availability of scholarships and grants offered by the California Fire Foundation. The test site locations' remoteness could be a barrier for some potential candidates. In planning for the next entry level Firefighter recruitment, DHRM and Fire Department staff have been discussing possible options for mitigating the transportation hurdle. Options discussed have included working with JAC to coordinate practice dates for Oakland candidates and providing bus transportation from downtown Oakland to the test site.

Planning is currently in process for an entry-level Firefighter recruitment with a target academy start date of September 2012.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Oakland residents who successfully obtain CPAT certification in preparation for City of Oakland Firefighter recruitments have the added advantage of being eligible for fire department recruitments throughout the state. The increased marketability of the candidate could result in greater employment opportunities.

DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

There are no direct disability or senior citizen access issues associated with this report.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff requests that City Council accept this informational report.

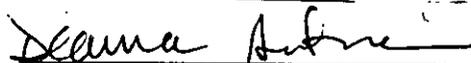
Respectfully submitted,



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**APPROVED AND
FORWARDED TO THE
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**



Office of the City Administrator