

CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Mark Love
Interim Director of Human
Resources Management

SUBJECT: Informational Report On Practices At
The Department Of Human
Resources Management for
Recruiting, Testing, And Hiring 9-1-1
Dispatchers During The Years 2022
And 2023

DATE: November 10, 2023

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Nov 17, 2023 21:17 PST)

Date: Nov 17, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive This Informational Report On Practices At The Department Of Human Resources Management for Recruiting, Testing, And Hiring 9-1-1 Dispatchers During The Years 2022 And 2023 From: Councilmember Ramachandran Recommendation: Receive An Informational Report On Practices At The Department Of Human Resources Management For Recruiting, Testing, And Hiring 9-1-1 Dispatchers During The Years 2022 And 2023, Including But Not Limited To: 1) Staffing Levels And Vacancy Trends During That Time Period; 2) Data On The Number Of Applications Received And Processed, Examinations Conducted, And Candidates Deemed Qualified By Month; And 3) Processes And Timelines For Processing Applications And Forwarding Qualified Candidates To OPD For Consideration, Including An Explanation Of How Continuous Hiring Processes Actually Function And During What Months Continuous Hiring Took Place.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This informational report is to inform the City Council on the practices of the Department of Human Resources Management (HRM) for recruiting and testing of the Police Communications Dispatchers during the years 2022 and 2023 including: 1) Staffing levels and vacancy trends, 2) Continuous recruiting, 3) Data on the number of applications received and processed, 4) Applicants and eligible lists, and 5) Online exams.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

This informational report was requested by the City Council at the September 28, 2023 Rules Committee, to provide an overview of the Department of Human Resource Management's recruitment practices during the years 2022 and 2023 for the classification of Police Communications Dispatchers in the Oakland Police Department (OPD) in light of the recent 2022-23 Alameda County Grand Jury Report Findings Titled "Oakland 911 Still Lacking A Timely Response."

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

This is an informational report which requested by Councilmember Ramachandran which describes the practices in hiring for 911 dispatch from 2022 to 2023. HRM in conjunction with OPD made changes to the recruitment process in the spring of 2023 and will make additional adjustments in 2024 to further the City priority of holistic community safety.

1. Current Staffing Levels and Recent Vacancy Trends

There are currently 76 funded Police Communications Dispatcher positions, 20 of which are currently vacant.

Table 1 shows the dates when each of the 18 of the 20 currently vacant dispatcher positions became vacant. The other two positions are newly added and have never been filled.

Table 1. Police Communications Dispatcher Vacancies by Month

Date	Total Vacancies	Date	Total Vacancies
October 2020	1	November 2022	9
April 2021	2	January 2023	10
September 2021	3	March 2023	11
October 2021	4	April 2023	13
December 2021	5	May 2023	16
July 2022	7	July 2023	17
August 2022	8	August 2023	18

2. Continuous Hiring

HRM started continuously accepting applications for the role of Police Communications Dispatcher prior to August 2017. In its first iteration, HRM would post recruitment after recruitment with an open date prior to the actual date that applications could be submitted and a new close date, about a month apart, so that it appeared to candidates that the recruitment was open on a

continuous basis. This was problematic because interest cards were only sent the day of the announcement, so candidates that had submitted interest cards were not notified that a new announcement had opened, since the open date was backdated (which occurred in the past). In August of 2018, the Police Communications Dispatcher recruitments were paused due to a union-led strike.

In August of 2020, a new recruitment process was implemented to ensure that interested applicants were notified of posted recruitments in a timely manner. Recruitments were opened consecutively, approximately monthly, to accept applications. As soon as one recruitment closed, another one immediately opened the same or following day, giving the appearance of a continuous recruitment. Since each recruitment cycle was actually a unique process, the same candidates would often submit a new application each month. This created duplicate applications in the system that had to be disqualified; artificially inflating the size of the candidate pool. This process was implemented during the pandemic along with introducing online unproctored testing to the Police Communications Dispatcher recruitment process.

And in January of 2023, HRM leadership discovered that the 2022/2023 Police Communications Dispatcher applications had not been processed for approximately 12 months by employees who were no longer employed by the City. HRM staff reviewed the previous Police Communications Dispatcher recruitments to propose improvements to the recruitment processes to ensure that this would not happen again. Members of the HRM Recruitment team met with OPD HR prior to April of 2023 to discuss proposed changes to the Police Communications Dispatcher continuous recruitment process.

The proposed changes included launching a single continuous recruitment process, where all candidates apply to the same recruitment plan, removing the ability to submit duplicate applications. They also included updating the job announcement to use more plain language and provide a better description of what someone may love about a career in dispatching and challenges that people may face, painting a more realistic preview of the job. Additionally, HRM would publish a recruitment timeline on the job announcement to ensure candidates have a clear understanding of when their applications will be screened and when the required assessments will take place.

Candidates who indicate qualifying education/experience would no longer be required to find an approved location to take a (sometimes paid) typing assessment, but instead would be able to demonstrate their typing ability from a location of their choosing during the specified date range, with no restrictions on time of day. Moving the typing assessment online would increase the accessibility to all candidates and create a more equitable process overall. It should be noted, if a candidate does not have access to a computer, they will be given the opportunity to take the assessment at HRM – which has happened a handful of times now.

HRM and OPD met to discuss the proposed changes prior to implementation, but it took a short period of time for HRM to finalize the logistics and put the new process in place. There was a 10-day window of time that no applications were accepted for the Police Communications Dispatcher recruitment process while HRM set up the new job announcement, governmentjobs.com exam plan, and the integrated assessments. This 10-day period of time was from April 1, 2023 – April

10, 2023. During this window, interested candidates were encouraged to submit interest cards, so they would be notified when the new recruitment process opened and they could apply.

The change to no longer accept outside typing certificates decreased the time for HRM to process the candidates through the recruitment process, since the typing scores now import directly to the candidate's profile in the applicant tracking system. The required CitiCall assessment has been administered online, unproctored, since 2021, and that remained the same with the 2023 changes, but now scores are integrated into the candidate's profile through the applicant tracking system as well.

Attachment 1 is a breakdown of the recruitment periods associated with those recruitment processes from August 2020 – October 2023.

3. Data on the number of applications received and processed

See attachment 1 for information on the specific recruitments processed from August 2020 to October 2023.

Minimum qualifications for the Police Communications Dispatcher are:

Any combination of education and experience that is equivalent to the following minimum qualifications is acceptable.

Education: Equivalent to graduation from high school

Experience: Two years of recent full-time equivalent of responsible work experience. College education may substitute for experience on a year for year basis.

Typing: minimum typing speed of 35 words per minute (wpm).

4. Applicants and Interviews

The recruitment steps for Police Communications Dispatcher include the following:

- Apply
 - Candidates submit an application online at www.governmentjobs.com.
- Application Screening
 - HRM staff screens the submitted applications after the specified filing period.
 - Candidates that do not clearly demonstrate that they possess the minimum qualifications are notified by HRM that they will not advance in the recruitment process.
- Typing Assessment
 - Candidates that clearly demonstrate their qualifications are provided instructions to complete the required typing assessment.
 - Candidates that do not participate in the typing assessment or fail to demonstrate the required words per minute, are notified that they will not advance in the recruitment process. Applicants have the opportunity to reapply every 90 days.

- CritiCall
 - Candidates that demonstrate that they can type at least 35 words per minute are provided instructions to complete the required CritiCall assessment.
 - Candidates that do not participate in CritiCall or fail to achieve the required pass point on each module, are notified by HRM that they will not advance in the recruitment process.
- Preference Points
 - HRM screens all the candidates that have passing scores on the typing assessment and CritiCall to determine who is eligible for additional points, i.e., veteran's preference, Oakland residency.
- Placed on Eligible List / Referred to OPD
 - Candidates' total points and rank on the eligible list are determined.
 - Candidates are notified of their final score and rank.
 - HRM refers the candidates to OPD to conduct their departmental hiring interviews.

Attachment 1 From August 2020 through April 2022, it took as little as 30 days, as many as 159 days, and an average of 73 days from the first day of application acceptance to candidates placed on the eligible list and referred to OPD (between recruitments 20-PS162-08 and 22-PS162-04).

Attachment 2 outlines the 2023 recruitment timeline goals that were established prior to April 11, 2023, with a consistent maximum 69 days between application acceptance to candidates placed on the eligible list and referred to OPD.

Note: Candidates were directed to submit interest cards through governmentjobs.com in March of 2023 to be notified when the updated 2023 continuous recruitment opened. A total of 279 candidates were asked to submit interest cards and "reapply" if they were still interested in being considered for the role of Police Communications Dispatcher, since the 22-PS162-05, 22-PS162-06, 22-PS162-07, and 22-PS162-11 applications were never processed. Moving forward, the only reason a candidate may be encouraged to reapply is if the candidate fails one of the required assessments. Candidates must wait 90 days to reapply to the continuous Police Communications Dispatcher recruitment.

5. Online Exams

Prior to 2023, candidates were asked to submit a certification of their average words per minute along with their application. The recruitment process was updated in 2023 to removed this requirement.

The 20-PS162-08 job announcement stated:

A typing certificate from a recognized educational institution, employment agency, or other organization certifying ability to type at least 35 net words per minute (35 WPM) is required. Certificate must include name of school, agency, or institution conducting the testing, and the number of errors; the signature of the individual responsible for the testing (for in-person tests only); and the testing date. The typing certificate must be based on a

5-minute typing test. Net words per minute shall be determined by subtracting the number of errors from the total words per minute typed. Applications received without a valid typing certificate, or not meeting the minimum net words per minute WILL NOT be considered and WILL NOT be contacted to correct the deficiency. Online self-administered typing tests WILL be accepted. If you take an online test, a screenshot including all of the above results must be attached to your application.

In 2021, the 21-PS162-01 job announcement stated:

Attach a typing certificate issued within one (1) year before the closing date of this announcement from a recognized educational institution, employment agency, or other organization certifying ability to type at least 35 net words per minute (35 WPM). Certificate must include:

1. the name of school, agency, or institution conducting the testing
2. total WPM
3. the number of errors
4. net WPM
5. the signature of the individual responsible for the testing
6. the testing date

The typing certificate must be based on a 5-minute typing test. Net words per minute shall be determined by subtracting the number of errors from the total words per minute typed. Applications received without a valid typing certificate, or not meeting the minimum net words per minute WILL NOT be considered and WILL NOT be contacted to correct the deficiency.

The typing assessments were required to show a date “within one (1) year before the closing date of this job announcement.” The option to take an online self-administered typing test was removed in an effort to streamline the process, so that HRM staff would not have to spend additional time to verify that the assessments were accurate. Furthermore, based on the information in the announcement, HRM was not required to notify the candidate if they did not submit the correct information properly.

In 2023, the change to the recruitment process removed the option to submit a typing certificate from an external assessment center. Requiring all candidates to take the typing test online through TestGenius, an online testing platform, helped to reduce the time it took HRM to process the applications since scores are uploaded automatically into the applicant tracking system. It also removed the barrier that required candidates to find the at a facility that facilitated the typing test. Furthermore, it removed the potential financial burden, if the assessment center charged a fee to complete the assessment.

The 23-PS162 recruitment states:

Candidates that clearly demonstrate that they possess the required minimum qualifications will be invited to participate in an online typing assessment. The typing assessment will consist of three, five-minute timed typing tests. The scores attained on the three typing assessments will be averaged to determine candidate's average net WPM. Candidates must demonstrate the ability to type at least 35 average net words per minute. Note, a typing certification will NOT be accepted in lieu of the required typing assessment; all candidates are required to take and pass the typing assessment.

Regarding remote testing, the city's multiple-choice assessments and typing assessments are now administered online and un-proctored. This has been the case since the beginning of 2023 when the City purchased the TestGenius / NeoGov integration.

Below are some key points HRM considers when administering a remote unproctored multiple choice exam:

- Type of questions – Use question types that are not easy to Google. The exam content should focus on situational judgement questions, rather than knowledge-based questions.
- Time constraints – Candidates should be given enough time to respond to each item, but not too much time that they can research an appropriate response. Pilot testing is important to ensure adequate time is allotted.
- Test Architecture – Include a strong set of instructions that outline what could happen if a candidate cheats on the exam. Inform candidates that they are prohibited from seeking assistance by referencing sources, data, information, or communicating with other individuals. Clearly outline what candidates can expect during the assessment process. Always be sure to provide contact information and instructions if technical issues arise.
- Test Links – Each candidate receives their own personal link to take the assessment. We can track which candidates receive the links and only send them to the candidates that are qualified to advance in the recruitment process. The links are one-time use only. The links do not allow candidates to log out and log back in later to complete the assessment.

Of course, there are challenges associated with un-proctored online testing. Those are related to access and equity, cheating, and item exposure. Some strategies to combat these concerns are offering test options at HRM for those that do not have access to a computer or reliable internet. HRM encourages departments to do confirmatory assessments of finalists during their departmental hiring process. Regarding item exposure, only the qualified candidates are sent a link to the exam and each assessment is tailored to assess the core competencies essential for successful performance for the given classification.

Research supports the validity and reliability of remote testing (including unproctored) compared to traditional proctored testing. Furthermore, research supports the ideology that most candidates do not cheat on unproctored employment tests. Below are the citations from articles supporting these statements.

Beatty, J. C., Nye, C. D., Borneman, M., Kantrowitz, T. M., Drasgow, F., & Grauer, E. (2011). Proctored versus unproctored internet tests: Are unproctored tests as predictive of job performance? *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 19, 1-10.

Fallow, S., Kantrowitz, T. M., & Dawson, C. R. (2012). Global assessment trends report. Technicaitl Report. Alpharetta, GA: SHL.

Guo, J., & Drasgow, F. (2010). Identifying cheating on unproctored internet tests: the z test and the likelihood ratio test. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 18, 351-364.

Kantrowitz, T. M., Fetzer, M. S., & Dawson, C. R. (2011). Computer adaptive testing (CAT): A faster, smarter, and more secure approach to pre-employment testing. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26, 227-232.

Kantrowitz, T. M., & Gutierrez, S. (2013). The security of employment testing: Practices that keep pace with evolving organizational demands and technology innovations. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 50, 33-42.

Lievens, F., & Harris, M. M. (2003). Research on Internet recruitment and testing: Current status and future directions. In C. L. Cooper & I. T. Robertson (Eds.). *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 18, pp. 131- 165). Chichester: Wiley.

Templer, K. J., & Lange S. R. (2008). Internet testing: Equivalence between proctored lab and unproctored field conditions, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24, 1216-122.

FISCAL IMPACT

This is an informational report so there is no fiscal impact.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

No outreach was deemed necessary for the presentation of the information contained in this report beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures.

COORDINATION

This report was prepared with input from Oakland Police Department.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There is no economic opportunity associated with this report.

Environmental: There is no environmental opportunity associated with this report.

Race & Equity:

Jestin D. Johnson, City Administrator

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HRM will work with the Department of Race and Equity to address any inequities that may arise from the changes to the recruitment process.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive This Informational Report On Practices At The Department Of Human Resources Management for Recruiting, Testing, And Hiring 9-1-1 Dispatchers During The Years 2022 And 2023 From: Councilmember Ramachandran
Recommendation: Receive An Informational Report On Practices At The Department Of Human Resources Management For Recruiting, Testing, And Hiring 9-1-1 Dispatchers During The Years 2022 And 2023, Including But Not Limited To: 1) Staffing Levels And Vacancy Trends During That Time Period; 2) Data On The Number Of Applications Received And Processed, Examinations Conducted, And Candidates Deemed Qualified By Month; And 3) Processes And Timelines For Processing Applications And Forwarding Qualified Candidates To OPD For Consideration, Including An Explanation Of How Continuous Hiring Processes Actually Function And During What Months Continuous Hiring Took Place.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Mark Love, Interim Human Resources Director, at 510-238-6338.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Love

Mark Love (Nov 17, 2023 15:57 PST)

MARK LOVE
Interim Human Resources Director
Human Resources Management Department

Reviewed by:
Amber Lytle, Human Resources Manager

Prepared by:
Mark Love, Interim Human Resources Director
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Attachments (2):

- 1: Data On The Number Of Applications Received And Processed
- 2: 23-PS162 Continuous Recruitment Timeline

City Council
December 5, 2023

Attachment 1: Data On The Number Of Applications Received And Processed

Recruitment Number	Applications Accepted Starting	Application Filing Deadline	Number of Applications Received	Number of Duplicates	Did Not Meet MQs	Met MQs	No Typing	Failed Typing	Invited to CritiCall	Did not Participate in CritiCall	Failed CritiCall	Number Placed on Eligible List/ Referred	Date Placed on Eligible List / Referred
20-PS162-08	8/24/2020	9/13/2020	91	9	2	80	NO TESTING OPTIONS - CANDIDATES HAD TO PAY TO TEST ELSEWHERE & SUBMIT RESULTS					20	9/23/2020
20-PS162-09	9/14/2020	1/6/2021	132	16	0	116	NO TESTING OPTIONS - CANDIDATES HAD TO PAY TO TEST ELSEWHERE & SUBMIT RESULTS					29	2/8/2021
21-PS162-01	1/6/2021	2/1/2021	65	2	2	61	9	7	45	6	19	20	3/15/2021
21-PS162-02	2/1/2021	3/2/2021	70	7	3	60	19	9	32	6	13	13	3/25/2021
21-PS162-03	3/1/2021	4/1/2021	101	9	7	85	17	23	45	3	30	12	4/14/2021
21-PS162-04	4/1/2021	4/23/2021	38	4	1	33	9	9	15	2	8	5	5/25/2021
21-PS162-05	4/23/2021	5/28/2021	81	5	5	71	9	24	38	5	25	8	6/17/2021
21-PS162-06	5/27/2021	6/24/2021	67	5	4	58	14	9	35	3	17	15	7/12/2021
21-PS162-07	6/24/2021	7/29/2021	82	12	4	66	20	12	34	6	19	9	8/16/2021
21-PS162-08	7/29/2021	8/25/2021	70	4	2	64	18	14	32	6	17	9	9/27/2021
21-PS162-09	8/26/2021	9/29/2021	97	7	0	90	25	22	43	9	20	14	11/17/2021
21-PS162-10	9/30/2021	10/28/2021	75	14	5	55	19	12	25	7	11	7	12/2/2021
21-PS162-11	10/28/2021	11/24/2021	66	5	5	56	12	13	31	6	17	8	1/4/2022
21-PS162-12	11/25/2021	12/30/2021	91	17	6	68	20	12	36	8	23	5	2/22/2022
22-PS162-01	12/30/2021	1/26/2022	56	5	7	44	21	7	16	4	6	6	3/11/2022
22-PS162-02	1/27/2022	3/1/2022	61	10	5	46	12	14	20	8	8	4	4/11/2022
22-PS162-03	3/1/2022	3/24/2022	56	5	9	42	18	5	19	4	10	5	6/6/2022
22-PS162-04	3/24/2022	4/25/2022	47	8	0	39	19	7	13	5	2	6	8/30/2022
22-PS162-05	4/21/2022	5/19/2022	71	5	5	61							
22-PS162-06	5/18/2022	6/20/2022	35										
22-PS162-07	6/16/2022	10/7/2022	180										
APPLICATIONS WERE NOT PROCESSED													
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APPLICATIONS WERE NOT PROCESSED													
4/1/23 all candidates were notified that the recruitment was cancelled, and they were encouraged to submit an interest card to be notified when the next recruitment process was opened													
23-PS162	4/11/2023	5/15/2023	129	0	3	126	48	28	50	10	18	22	6/20/2023
	5/16/2023	6/19/2023	110	0	5	105	48	23	34	8	11	15	7/14/2023
	6/20/2023	7/24/2023	145	0	4	141	50	34	57	13	20	24	8/17/2023
	7/25/2023	8/28/2023	157	0	0	157	69	34	54	13	15	26	9/25/2023
8/29/2023			In progress										
IN PROGRESS													

Justin D. Johnson, City Administrator

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 Date: November 15, 2023

Attachment 2: 23-PS162 Continuous Recruitment Timeline

Applications Received Start Date	4/11/2023	5/16/2023	6/20/2023	7/25/2023	8/29/2023	10/3/2023	11/7/2023	12/12/2023
Applications Received Cut Off Date	5/15/2023	6/19/2023	7/24/2023	8/28/2023	10/2/2023	11/6/2023	12/11/2023	1/15/2024
HRM Application Review Complete	5/18/2023	6/22/2023	7/27/2023	8/31/2023	10/5/2023	11/9/2023	12/14/2023	1/18/2024
Not Qualified Notices Sent	5/19/2023	6/23/2023	7/28/2023	9/1/2023	10/6/2023	11/9/2023	12/15/2023	1/19/2024
Typing Assessment Invites Sent	5/22/2023	6/26/2023	7/31/2023	9/1/2023	10/9/2023	11/13/2023	12/18/2023	1/22/2024
Typing Assessment Day 1	5/22/2023	6/26/2023	7/31/2023	9/4/2023	10/9/2023	11/13/2023	12/18/2023	1/22/2024
Typing Assessment Day 5	5/26/2023	6/30/2023	8/4/2023	9/8/2023	10/13/2023	11/17/2023	12/22/2023	1/26/2024
Failed Typing Notices Sent	5/31/2023	7/5/2023	8/9/2023	9/13/2023	10/18/2023	11/22/2023	12/27/2023	1/31/2024
HRM Updates No Shows	5/31/2023	7/5/2023	8/9/2023	9/13/2023	10/18/2023	11/22/2023	12/27/2023	1/31/2024
Passing Typing Results Sent with Instructions / Link for CritiCall	5/31/2023	7/5/2023	8/9/2023	9/13/2023	10/18/2023	11/22/2023	12/27/2023	1/31/2024
CritiCall Day 1	6/1/2023	7/6/2023	8/10/2023	9/14/2023	10/19/2023	11/23/2023	12/28/2023	2/1/2024
CritiCall Day 5	6/7/2023	7/12/2023	8/16/2023	9/20/2023	10/25/2023	11/29/2023	1/3/2024	2/7/2024
Failed CritiCall Notices Sent	6/8/2023	7/13/2023	8/17/2023	9/21/2023	10/26/2023	11/30/2023	1/4/2024	2/8/2024
HRM Checks for Preference Points	6/8/2023	7/13/2023	8/17/2023	9/21/2023	10/26/2023	11/30/2023	1/4/2024	2/8/2024
HRM Places Passing Candidates on eligible list	6/15/2023	7/20/2023	8/24/2023	9/28/2023	11/2/2023	12/7/2023	1/11/2024	2/15/2024
Passing Candidates notified of final score & rank	6/19/2023	7/24/2023	8/28/2023	10/2/2023	11/6/2023	12/11/2023	1/15/2024	2/19/2024
HRM Refers Eligible Candidates to OPD	6/19/2023	7/24/2023	8/28/2023	10/2/2023	11/6/2023	12/11/2023	1/15/2024	2/19/2024