

A meeting of the Towanda Borough Police Civil Service Commission was held on August 21, 2023 in the Council Room of the Municipal Building located at 724 Main St, Towanda PA. The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Commission Chairperson Alec Garden.

Present were Commissioners Alec Garden, Mark Henery, and Ryan Eberlin. No visitors in attendance.

Minutes

The minutes of the December 7, 2022 meeting were approved upon a motion by Mr. Eberlin, seconded by Mr. Henery, all in favor. Motion passed to approve the minutes as presented. Noted the meeting scheduled for February 13, 2023 was cancelled.

New Business

Mr. Eberlin stated two of the three candidates from the last time were both hired; the third failing the physical agility test. What has come to light is Officer Ryan Edsell will be leaving the force with his winning of a Magistrate seat and the PA State Police are pursuing the newest hire which is Garret Smith. Mr. Garden asked if Officer Smith has been through the State Police academy. Mr. Eberlin answered he does not know any of the particulars just that Officer Smith will have a decision to make so we are in the position to definitely fill one upcoming vacancy and potentially two. The reality is we need to start the same process of almost one year ago.

Mr. Eberlin recalled the last time we posted a request for an applicant pool giving notice that Towanda Borough is seeking pool applicants for Patrol Officer positions, full-time, part-time. The advertisement was run for approximately three weeks. Discussion followed on the timeline and where to run the same advertisement from last year.

Mr. Henery made a motion to proceed with the applicant pool with the notices to be publicized beginning September 1, 2023, a termination date of September 29, 2023 on the Borough website, Facebook, and same newspapers used prior. Seconded by Mr. Eberlin. Motion passed.

Ms. McGuire will update the advertisement and email it to Mr. Eberlin to proof-read and approve the advertisement; the Borough Manager Lauren Egleston has access to an Indeed.com account to post it there.

A meeting date of October 5, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building was set by Mr. Eberlin with all in agreement.

Mr. Henery contacted Mrs. Jene Conklin after the last Written Examination testing to see how it went and to thank her for her service since he was the one to contact her initially; she was very pleased to help out and happy for the opportunity to give back to the Borough. Mr. Henery will reach out to her to administer the written examination again with a test date potentially in October 2023.

➤ Act 120

Mr. Eberlin mentioned Act 120 as a requirement for application and it's not that anybody would or wouldn't know it on our posting because we don't necessarily state it there so he doesn't know if we received any applicants last time that were not Act 120 certified.

Mr. Eberlin stated it is again at the request of the Police Committee and the Borough Council that the Police Civil Service Commission consider removing Act 120 as a requirement for applicants as it is currently stated. Removal of Act 120 does not mean that it's not still a requirement to be an active Officer; they could not be scheduled until they pass Act 120 training and be certified. Mr. Eberlin added as far as having it as a prerequisite for application, the Police Committee and Borough Council are hoping the Civil Service Commission consider removing.

Mr. Garden asked if we run the Ad and receive an applicant already certified, is it an instant hire? Mr. Eberlin answered yes as we did with the last two who were already Act 120 certified, however, they must still pass all the Borough testing. Mr. Henery also added the Borough testing is required regardless of Act 120 certification. Mr. Eberlin stated Act 120 certification is also state law but it doesn't state that you have to have it to call in an application.

Mr. Eberlin stated It was discussed in Council that removal of Act 120 at application would essentially be a recruiting tactic where you could offer financial assistance to complete the training and upon successful completion you would then become a Towanda Police Officer with all the legal ease worked out and in place before hire. Solicitor Smith would have to be involved to draw up a legal document. The source for Act 120 certification in this area is the academy in Mansfield. Mr. Henery asked Mr. Eberlin if the Council wants the Commission to make a motion and if the whole process to remove the Act 120 certification at application begins with the Commission? Mr. Eberlin answered yes the process starts with the Commission, but he was hoping to get Chief Randy Epler's opinion before making a decision and taking the recommendation to Borough Council. Mr. Eberlin stated the Council could choose not to take the recommendation.

Mr. Henery would be happy enough to make a motion for the Commission to approve waiving the Act 120 certification as part of the requirement for application with the understanding the

individual would pass the Borough testing and the Borough would compensate them for the cost of completion of the Act 120. Mr. Eberlin said basically if they are a top candidate for hire and are not Act 120 certified, we would have some agreement with them to send them to the academy. Mr. Henery would recommend that the Borough underwrite that with the understanding that they in turn give the Borough back X number of years in service.

After further discussion on the Commission's recommendation to remove Act 120 certification prior to application, no formal motion was made on this matter.

Old Business

No discussion.

Other Discussion

Mr. Eberlin looked up on his phone information on the Mansfield Academy; the cost is \$2,737.00 and the student must demonstrate the ability to perform in the 30th percentile; course length is six and one-half months.

At the October 5, 2023 meeting, it will be known how many written exams will need to be ordered. Ms. McGuire will order the appropriate number of tests.

Adjournment

Mr. Eberlin motioned the meeting be adjourned at 4:43 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Henery. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie L. McGuire

Laurie L. McGuire
Recording Secretary

A meeting of the Towanda Borough Police Civil Service Commission was held on October 5, 2023 in the Council Room of the Municipal Building located at 724 Main St, Towanda PA. The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Commission Chairperson Alec Garden.

Present were Commissioners Alec Garden, Mark Henery, and Ryan Eberlin. No visitors in attendance.

Minutes

The minutes of the August 21, 2023 meeting were approved upon a motion by Mr. Henery, seconded by Mr. Eberlin, all in favor. Motion passed to approve the minutes as presented.

New Business

Three applications were received within the advertised deadline and all paid the \$25.00 required fee. Approval given to Laurie McGuire, Civil Service Commission Secretary, to order three written POST (Police Officer Selection Test) exams on October 5, 2023; once ordered, the exams and self-score examiner's manual generally arrive the following day.

Mr. Henery stated he has contacted the previous examiner, Mrs. Jene Conklin, and she is very willing to administer the written testing again and has access inside the school building. Mr. Eberlin said Chief Epler is out of town and that Sergeant Lantz will be there to assist on the to be determined test date should Chief Epler not be available. Mr. Eberlin reminded the board the applicants are to be given 10-days' notice before the test date.

The written exam test date of October 21, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. in the Towanda Area High School Library was selected with a second option of October 28, 2023 should Mrs. Conklin not be available on October 21st. Mr. Henery will follow-up with Mrs. Conklin and advise Ms. McGuire so that the proper notification can be sent to the three applicants.

Mr. Eberlin discussed there is the possibility now of two patrol officer positions opening. Chief Epler informed him that Officer Garret Smith is considering entering the Pennsylvania State Police and already known Officer Ryan Edsell will be leaving to serve as an elected District Magistrate. Mr. Eberlin stated he will push for the Towanda Borough Council to offer two positions.

Following discussion of the applicants and which have Veteran's status, tentative dates of November 4th and November 11th were selected for the swim and run Physical Testing depending upon the availability of Mr. Keith Brown, lifeguard certified, to monitor. Mr. Eberlin will make

contact with Mr. Brown and advise Chief Epler and the Commission. Should Mr. Brown not be available, the Physical Testing dates would move to November 11th and November 18th, 2023.

A tentative date for the Oral Exam was discussed for the week of December 4th or December 11th, 2023. Chief Epler will assemble the five member Oral Exam Board and coordinate a suitable date. Mr. Eberlin expressed a desire to have all the scores available before year end.

The next meeting of the Civil Service Commission will be December 18, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

Old Business

Mr. Eberlin reported the Towanda Borough Council did vote to look at the removal of Act 120 Certification with the application process. The Police Committee has teed it up over to Solicitor Fred Smith to look in the regulations and give guidance and formal documentation articulating how we would compensate somebody for sending them to the Academy, and if the course wasn't completed how would we be expected to be reimbursed. Solicitor Smith will provide a draft and Council would have to approve it and the Civil Service Commission would have to approve it before going into the Civil Service regulations. Solicitor Smith will report on the legalities to Council at a later time.

Adjournment

Mr. Eberlin motioned the meeting be adjourned at 1:40 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Henery. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie L. McGuire

Laurie L. McGuire
Recording Secretary

A meeting of the Towanda Borough Police Civil Service Commission was held on November 16, 2023 in the Council Room of the Municipal Building located at 724 Main St, Towanda PA. The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. by Commissioner Ryan Eberlin.

Present were Commissioners Alec Garden, Mark Henery, and Ryan Eberlin; Police Chief Randy Epler. No visitors in attendance.

Minutes

The minutes of the October 5, 2023 meeting were approved upon a motion by Mr. Eberlin, seconded by Mr. Henery, all in favor. Motion passed to approve the minutes as presented.

New Business

- **Applicants**

As presented in written format from testing proctor, Mrs. Jene Conklin, applicants, Michael LaManna and Trevor Wills both passed the Written Examination on October 21, 2023 with overall average scores of 92.50% (LaManna) and 86.25% (Wills). Mr. Wills passed the Physical Agility Test; and Oral Examination testing with an overall average grade of 88.67%. Chief Epler noted there was a change in the interviewers due to scheduling conflicts; David Jurnack and Lou Alteri, were replaced by Justin Popovich (Bradford County Probation Department) and Tyler Roof, local business owner.

Chief Epler reported applicant, Michael LaManna, had withdrawn from further testing as he decided to stay with his current employer with the Bradford County Drug Task Force as a Detective.

- **Recommendation to Council**

Chief Epler stated his recommendation to Borough Council is to hire Trevor Wills part-time to train him for a couple of months; he is a 21-year-old, first-time police officer graduating from the Mansfield Academy this date. Chief Epler noted he has spoken with Mr. Wills working as a part-timer, probably working 40 plus hours per week and he is thrilled at the opportunity. Once Mr. Wills has proven himself to "us" (Chief Epler and the Borough), he would be offered full-time employment. Mr. Henery asked Chief Epler if there is anything in the contract that specifies a period of time such as six-month probationary; Chief Epler responded Yes for full-time, the first six-months you basically are an at-will employee just like if you were a part-time employee.

Commissioner Eberlin appointed Laurie McGuire to do a certification list to Borough Council listing Trevor Wills as an eligible candidate for appointment to a police position in the Towanda Borough Police Department. The certification list will be in the next meeting packets of the Borough Council.

- Discussion & Advertisement of a New Applicant Pool List

Chief Epler suggested there be put together a package of what the Borough pays in salary range, covers for insurance, and other benefits thinking maybe it pulls in someone who wouldn't otherwise apply. Borough Manager, Lauren Hotaling, would advise what is proper to include in the package and then come back to the Commission for what to put into an advertisement.

Mr. Henery asked Chief Epler where does Towanda Borough stand for the area pay scale. Chief Epler responded he believes we are second behind Sayre Borough in salaries; everyone has had to bump up their game to keep from losing officers. Mr. Henery asked Mr. Eberlin if from Council's perspective are the police locked in and the budget set. Mr. Eberlin answered no the budget has not been set yet and is being worked on with a budget meeting in the coming week; there is always enough flexibility for adjustments, they can be done but the union contract has to be considered. Council has considered offering stipends or a sign-on bonus. Chief Epler added there is a grant that has been applied for that would allow offering sign-on bonuses; however, the Borough has not yet been awarded the grant and should know something soon.

Chief Epler stated it was actually Sergeant Lantz's idea to advertise with a benefit package included; he will tell him tonight to write up a nice, clean looking package that covers the high points and get it to Lauren Hotaling to approve and Laurie McGuire will put the new revised advertisement out in the newspaper. At this time, Chief Epler feels the Act 120 matter doesn't need to be included in the current newspaper ad but when the advertisement would go out national on Police One bulletin board or Indeed.com the full understanding of Act 120 will need to be addressed. Any changes to Act 120 have been tabled by Borough Council at this time as reported by Chief Epler.

A motion was made by Mr. Henery, seconded by Mr. Garden to run a newspaper advertisement of an Applicant Pool List from December 1, 2023 to January 12, 2024. Motion carried.

- Corporal Position Opening

Chief Epler reported there is a position for a Corporal which the Borough has OK'd. There used to be two Sergeants; as soon as he became Chief, he requested it fixed and the chain of command to be Chief – Sergeant - Corporal. There was never testing for the Corporal position because he felt

it would have potentially created a conflict amongst the staff he had at that time and didn't want to create that kind of animosity in his police station. He explained there would be an Interview Board established; that Board would score it out and then the Civil Service Commission would accept the Interview Board results and then recommend the candidate to the Borough Council. Mr. Chief Epler stated there could possibly be three that would apply, two which would have military preference.

Chief Epler requested adding to the agenda of the next meeting be to set a Corporal Interview Board.

Old Business

- Physical Agility Test

Chief Epler discussed moving forward with changes to the requirements of the physical agility testing and expressed his overview of what standards he feels need to be removed, modified, or something new added to challenge the applicants. He will draw up the changes including the MPOETC standards for the Commission to review and decide what they want to adopt. He will email the physical standards to the Commission to peruse before deciding.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Police Civil Service Commission will be Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Unanimous adjournment of the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie L. McGuire

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Recording Secretary

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