

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
MAY 5, 2025

The regular meeting of the Civil Service Commission was called to order on May 5, 2025, at 4 p.m. in the Council Chamber, with Chairman Polinko presiding.

Present: Chairman John Polinko, Vice-Chairman Richard Tayek, Secretary William Albrecht, and Clerk Valerie Rosmarin.

Also Present: Mayor Mark Spaetzel, Councilman Geoffrey Smith, Police Chief Vince Molnar, HR Director Lynn Kernya, and Fire Chief Jeremy Betsa.

1. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to approve the minutes of April 14, 2025. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Tayek. Motion passed 3-0.

2. Fire Department

- Firefighter/Paramedic Appointment

Fire Chief Betsa reported that a conditional offer was given to Candidate Thomas Gerent last month. Mr. Gerent successfully completed all pre-employment tests and will start on May 13, 2025.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to certify the appointment of Thomas Gerent to the position of Firefighter/Paramedic in the Fire Department, effective May 13, 2025. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Tayek. Motion passed 3-0.

3. Police Department

- Police Chief Appointment

Chairman Polinko acknowledged the certified results of the Police Chief exam that ranked Caleb Robinson as the No. 1 Candidate.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to certify the probationary appointment of Caleb Robinson to the position of Police Chief in the Police Department, effective May 10, 2025. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

- Police Lieutenant Promotional

Chairman Polinko reported that one of the candidates protested the Assessment Center. The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) submitted a written response

to the Commission regarding the protest. Following the OACP's response, the Commission received an email from Sgt. Justin Ludwig removing his protest. As a result, an active protest pending no longer exists.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to certify the results of the Police Lieutenant promotional, written examination held on February 26, 2026, and the Assessment Center conducted on March 30, 2025, with Anthony Fabrizi achieving the highest score among the three candidates. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to certify the probationary appointment of Anthony Fabrizi in the position of Lieutenant in the Police Department, effective May 10, 2025. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Tayek. Motion passed 3-0.

- Entry-Level Police Officer Exam

Chairman Polinko reported that the estimate from Clancy & Associates to write and administer the Entry Level Police Officer exam is \$824.16. The estimate for the advertisement in *West Life* per issue is \$114 and Cleveland.com for 30 days is \$500.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to approve a budget of \$1,640 for the costs of the exam and advertisements in *West Life* and Cleveland.com. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

- Lateral Entry Police Officer Exam/Rule 14, Section C

Police Chief Molnar reported that eight retirements in the Police Department will occur within the next five years, and there will be a need to hire Lateral Entry Police Officers. He was pleased with the success of the lateral entry process developed and implemented in 2023-2024 and would like the Commission to consider amending Rule 14, Section C, to change the ratio of entry-level hires to lateral entry from 2:1 to 1:1. Last time 14 candidates were interviewed over two days. Some of those candidates could have been eliminated through a weighing process based on their experience, years of service, training, and education. If the applicants are ranked based on their qualifications, then the top 10 candidates could be interviewed in one day, rather than having to interview everyone who applies.

Chairman Polinko stated that the 2:1 ratio was determined because this was a new procedure for the Commission.

Police Chief Molnar stated that some cities have a 1:1 ratio, while others collect lateral-entry applications regularly. Hiring inexperienced officers require more supervision and training, and there are costs associated with these officers. The first three years are a labor-intensive process. If the City hires lateral-entry candidates, it is a cost savings. The vetting process developed for the last lateral-entry exam included a retired Police Lieutenant and a community member.

The Commission discussed the proposed process for narrowing lateral-entry police officer applicants to a top ten list based on objective criteria. Police Chief Molnar explained that candidates would be evaluated using a standardized rating system that considers factors such as experience, years of service, training, and military points. The goal is to reduce the number of interviews while ensuring the process remains merit-based and transparent.

Chairman Polinko emphasized the need to clearly communicate that submitting an application does not guarantee an interview. There was agreement that additional language in the job posting, or supplemental materials should clarify this process.

Police Chief Molnar noted that ranked candidates could be considered if initial applicants withdrew, as this approach aligned with current practices of requesting the top five names for a single vacancy.

The Commission discussed including supervisory experience or prior promotions as factors that could merit additional points in the ranking process. Chief Molnar stated that a preliminary background check by the Detective Bureau might be necessary to verify candidates' claimed qualifications before assigning rankings. It was also suggested that the ranking process be conducted with names concealed to ensure an unbiased, objective evaluation based solely on qualifications such as experience, years of service, and training.

The Commission emphasized the importance of clearly identifying and specifying the factors that will be used in evaluating lateral applicants. It was agreed that the language outlining these criteria must be precise and transparent so applicants understand how they will be assessed.

It was noted that interview questions used by the panel for the last lateral entry interviews were standardized and initially drafted by Lt. James Valencic. These questions were then reviewed and approved by the Civil Service Commission. The Commission agreed that establishing clear priorities for what is important in a candidate, and ensuring those priorities are reflected in the interview questions, is essential.

The Commission discussed the possibility of accepting lateral-entry applications year-round but noted concerns about the administrative burden of continuous background checks. It was suggested that maintaining a defined application window would help manage workload and resources.

Additionally, Police Chief Molnar took a moment to recognize and congratulate all recent promotional candidates for their dedication and effort. The high scores reflected their commitment, and the OACP assessors commented positively on the quality of Avon Lake's officers, noting they are helping lead the Police Department in a positive direction.

Action: Chairman Polinko will contact Attorney Dave Matty, who has advised the Commission previously regarding the Civil Service Rules, and to seek his opinion on the rule change and his recommendations on the criteria.

4. Public Works Department

- Laborer Appointment

Chairman Polinko reviewed the current Laborer Eligibility List and noted that Candidate Timothy Semmons was selected to fill the latest vacancy.

Clerk Rosmarin stated that at the Commission's last meeting, the Commission was informed that a conditional offer was given to Mr. Semmons, which he accepted. *Due to the time of the acceptance and the need to fill the vacancy before this meeting, this certification was requested retroactively to April 28, 2025.*

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to appoint Timothy Semmons to the position of Laborer in the Public Works Department, effective April 28, 2025. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

- Laborer Exam

Chairman Polinko reported that the estimate from Clancy & Associates to write and administer the Laborer exam is \$765. The estimate for the advertisement in *West Life* per issue is \$126.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to approve a budget of \$920 for the costs of the exam and advertisement in *West Life*. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

Action: HR Director Kernya stated that she will post the Laborer vacancy internally for five days as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Thereafter, the Commission can begin to advertise the examination.

- Engineering Technical Aide (ETA) I

HR Director Kernya reported that the last process conducted to fill the vacancy for the ETA I was an Examination by Structured Interview. Two candidates participated in the ETA I position and five candidates for the ETA II position. Earlier she spoke with Public Works Director Jon Liskovec, and he was in favor of utilizing the same process to fill the current vacancy for the ETA I position.

Clerk Rosmarin noted that the Commission previously decided the ETA II position would be filled through a written examination process. However, due to urgency last year, the Commission approved the use of interviews for both the ETA I and ETA II positions, which was the reason to deviate from the standard procedure.

The Commission discussed improving the interview process for the ETA I position. It was noted that the initial round of interviews during the previous cycle was conducted by engineers, but the general nature of the structured interview questions limited the ability to assess technical qualifications. To address this, it was suggested that the first round of interviews be conducted by the Department Head, HR Director, and another representative, with engineers potentially participating in a second round focused on top candidates. There was consensus on including at least a few technical questions to better evaluate relevant expertise. The final interview process is still to be determined.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to approve advertising for the position of ETA I in *West Life* for three weeks and Cleveland.com for 30 days with a budget of \$950. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

5. Municipal Court Job Descriptions

Chairman Polinko reported that job descriptions were submitted to the Commission for review. Clerk Rosmarin explained that the only job description adopted by Council for positions in the Municipal Court were for the Clerk of Court in 1990. Upon taking office, Judge Manning requested updated job descriptions for all Municipal Court positions. As a result, new and revised job descriptions for the Bailiff, Clerk of Court, and Deputy Clerk of Court were submitted to the Commission.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved to recommend the job descriptions of Bailiff, Clerk of Court, and Deputy Clerk of Court, as unclassified and forward them to the Human Resources Committee for formal adoption by the Council. Seconded by Secretary Albrecht. Motion passed 3-0.

6. Military Leave of Absence

Fire Chief Betsa reported that Firefighter/Paramedic Mike Rowe will commence military leave beginning June 1, with an expected return date of September 4. His military leave has been approved through the June 15 payroll under the applicable Ohio Revised Code provisions. Following that, he will remain on unpaid leave, at his request, until his return. Although he had accrued time available, he opted to preserve it for use upon his return.

The Commission discussed the City's responsibilities during the unpaid leave period, including pension and benefit considerations, and noted that an opinion from the Law Director has been requested to clarify these obligations.

Chairman Polinko stated that the formal request for leave was submitted to the Commission, and the Commission's approval is required. The discrepancy between the Collective Bargaining Agreement (90 days) and Civil Service Rules (up to one year) regarding leave duration will require further legal review.

Motion: Chairman Polinko moved for the consent of the Civil Service Commission to approve Firefighter/Paramedic Mike Rowe for a leave of absence without compensation for a period no longer than three months based on his military leave. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Tayek. Motion passed 3-0.

Action: Due to the inconsistency of the City Code, Civil Service Rules, and Collective Bargaining Agreement, if an adjustment is needed, the Commission will revisit this issue.

7. Annual Report

Clerk Rosmarin distributed the Annual Report to the Commission and said she would file it along with the latest copy of the Civil Service Rules to the State Personnel Board of Review.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

/s/ Valerie E. Rosmarin

Valerie E. Rosmarin, Civil Service Clerk

