



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

November 9, 2010

The Honorable Board of Aldermen
City Hall
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Honorable Board,

Upon the request of President Connolly we are providing information on the benefits of a reserve list and how it has been applied by the City of Somerville. As this process is very complicated we would, as always, welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss it further.

Our general goal through all public safety hiring is to ensure that the best candidates for the position are selected. This is important both to ensure the public safety of the community and also to protect the City's investment. We view the hiring of public safety professionals as a 30 year commitment and investment in an employee. We want to make sure we are getting the best candidates and making the wisest investments with the taxpayer dollars.

A point of clarification on the term "list:"

- HRD uses the term "list," "established list," or "open competitive list" to indicate a list of candidates from an open competitive exam that can be certified to a municipality for appointment at a later date. This list changes from time to time especially with the addition of returning military veterans.
- The term "certification" or "certified list" refers to the list sent to the city after a request has been made to HRD to fill a vacant position in a permanent or reserve list capacity.

TRAINING TIME

The savings associated with the Reserve List are the savings achieved by hiring permanent firefighters as soon as there is an opening and putting them to work immediately, as opposed to calling for a list when there is an opening, going through months of processing, and in the meanwhile backfilling positions with overtime and out-of-grade pay. The reserve list enables us



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to make permanent appointments in a more timely manner thus savings overtime and out-of-grade pay – and, more importantly, ensuring the public safety.

Unlike police officers there is no mandatory requirement for a firefighter to attend recruit training prior to coming to work. However, the City assumes tremendous liability placing “untrained” individuals on a fire company without documented and certified training. Training savings is achieved when the Fire Department does not have to train the individuals twice – once within the department and then again at the fire academy. The processing of a reserve list allows us to make permanent appointments in conjunction with an academy in a more timely manner.

Unless a firefighter reaches mandatory retirement age (65 years old), there is no actual way to know when and if he or she will retire. Sometimes they may give the department notice that they are thinking about retirement. However, on superannuation retirements, they can change their mind the day before and stay. This inability to know or predict retirements makes the reserve list a valuable method of providing for public safety as well as limiting costs.

COST SAVINGS TO TAXPAYER AND THE CITY

Filling vacancies quickly is important for the City. The Fire Department, unlike other business entities, operates with a minimum number of personnel on duty at all times. Vacant positions translate into increased overtime costs. If a firefighter, as allowed by contract, takes a personal or vacation day off or calls in sick that brings the minimum number on duty below a certain level, a firefighter is called in on overtime.

CERTIFICATION #290651

Several questions have arisen regarding appointments made off of Cert #290651 in February of 2010. Below is a chronology of events that we believe will be clarifying.

- Certification #290651 was requested from HRD on August 17, 2009;
- The Certification was dated September 9, 2009;
- Last Day to sign was September 21, 2009;
- Orientation was held September 24, 2009;
- Drug tests were administered on September 24 & 25, 2009;
- Physicals were administered from November 9 – 23, 2009;
- Psych Evaluations were administered from November 11 – 25, 2009
- Conditional offers of employment were made between October 20th and November 23rd;
- The Cert expired on December 2, 2009;
- The PAT preview was December 8, 2009;
- The PAT test was December 15, 2009;
- Interviews were held December 16 & 17;
- Due to a deployment and then recall one candidate took the PAT test on February 9, 2010 and was interviewed on February 11, 2010;
- Requests for extension were made to HRD on December 24, 2009, February 8, 2010; and February 24, 2010. The extension was approved on February 24, 2009 returned to the City approved on February 26, 2010; and

- On March 1, 2010 the Form 14 (Authorization of Employment Form) was sent to HRD and approved.

Again, if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of us.

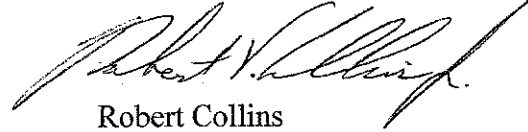
Sincerely,



Jessie Baker
Director of Personnel



Chief Kelleher
Fire Chief



Robert Collins
Labor Counsel