



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 11, 2021

### REPORT OF THE CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND PERSONNEL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mary Jo Rossetti	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Chief Charles Breen - SFD, Anne Gill - Director of Personnel, Khushbu Webber - Director of Legislative Affairs, Lauren Racaniello - Legislative Liaison, Kim Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 7:15 PM by Chair Rossetti and adjourned at 9:16 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Clingan, Strezo, Scott and Rossetti), 0 against and 0 absent.

Chair Rossetti briefed the committee about conversations she had with city staff, informing members that there are 9 candidates on the Fire Department list at the present time. Five of those candidates will be interviewed during this meeting and the remaining four will be interviewed at a future committee meeting, possibly on May 20<sup>th</sup>. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, the committee will meet to interview for the position of Director of Inspectional Services and Planning Board Members.

Presently, there are 14 vacancies in the Fire Department, thus, after the 9 candidates on the list are approved, 5 positions will remain to be filled. The names of the candidates for those 5 positions have not yet been submitted. Chief Breen stated that the new civil service list is out, and that the city will follow the civil service process, rather than the reserve list, when making future appointments. Ms. Gill told the members that she would request the new civil service list right away. Chair Rossetti requested that for the meeting of May 20<sup>th</sup>, Director Gill be prepared to respond to the unanswered questions as discussed within.

Councilor Scott commented about recent conversation about adding an additional company within the Fire Department and asked if the appointments before the committee this evening were sufficient to staff that company. Chief Breen stated that the appointments on tonight's agenda are to fill current vacancies in the department. Councilor Scott asked about the 2 military holds that were on the November 2019 list and Chief Breen said that they are back. Asked why the list needed to be refreshed, Chief Breen replied that it was suggested by Civil Service. Councilor Scott noted that there was some confusion since some individuals had signed both the original list and the refreshed list. Ms. Gill explained that the Personnel Department does its due diligence to make all candidates aware that they could sign

again if they would like to. Councilor Scott also spoke about “534” candidates and Ms. Gill explained that this refers to someone who was previously by-passed and files an appeal and wins that appeal to be put back on the list. There was a case that the city appealed, and lost, as the civil service ruling was upheld. Councilor Scott said he doesn't know why that “534” candidate is not before the committee tonight and was by-passed again. Ms. Gill replied that the selection committee, comprised of Chief Breen, Assistant Chief Major and former Chief of Staff Janice Delorey, felt that the candidate didn't have the experience to be put on list, adding that he won his appeal on a procedural matter, and that would not negate the requirements of the position nor the selection committee's decision that he was not qualified. Councilor Scott said that case was won because a member of the interview panel and someone who was guiding the process was found to have improperly influenced the process in order to go very far down the list and hire his nephew. Councilor Clingan asked what would happen if this individual filed another appeal and was successful again. Ms. Gill said she didn't know the answer but would find out. Councilor Clingan stated that he was not comfortable moving forward on these applicants tonight. Chief Breen noted that 6 individuals on the last list were by-passed to get to the candidates before the committee tonight. Ms. Gill commented that civil service is a law of opportunity and exists to have objective criteria in place when selecting candidates. The interview process is stringent and looks for qualities, skills and experience related to being a fire fighter. She stated that she has never seen a list manipulated in her experience. Councilor Mbah asked what this person did not have that resulted in him being by-passed and Chief Breen stated that he could not discuss it due to the appeal process. Councilor Scott said he had concerns with the makeup of the selection committee by having both the Chief and Assistant chief on the committee.

### **Approval of the April 13, 2021 Minutes**

The minutes were accepted on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Clingan, Strezo, Scott and Rossetti), 0 against and 0 absent.

**RESULT:**

**ACCEPTED**

### **211736: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Connor Colbert to the position of Reserve Firefighter.**

Chief Breen introduced the candidate and Chair Rossetti informed the him that he was free to make opening and closing statements, if desired, and would be interviewed in open session and in Executive Session and would then return to open session to conclude the interview.

The candidate told the members that he took an EMT course to get some training in preparation for a possible position as a firefighter. Councilor Scott asked about this training course and asked if it came up in the interview and the candidate acknowledged that it did. Chair Rossetti encouraged the candidate to further his education, if possible, to better serve the city and move up the ranks in the department.

Chair Rossetti confirmed that the candidate received and understood the notice of possible executive session and was willing to enter into executive session. She then made a motion to enter into executive session. That motion was laid on the table until all of tonight's open session interviews were completed. After the last candidate was interviewed in open session, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the above stated reason at 8:36 PM and returned to

the regular meeting at 8:59 PM. Chair Rossetti announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to return to the regular meeting.

Councilor Scott mentioned that past experience is important in public safety positions and that he is supportive of these candidates.

Chair Rossetti's motion to approve this item was approved on a unanimous roll call vote. The candidate was advised that the committee's recommendation would be before the City Council on May 13th for approval.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

**211737: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Nicholas Halloran to the position of Reserve Firefighter.**

Chief Breen introduced the candidate and Chair Rossetti informed the him that he was free to make opening and closing statements, if desired, and would be interviewed in open session and in Executive Session and would then return to open session to conclude the interview.

The candidate stated that teamwork is a big part of his life and he can't think of a more rewarding job than helping and serving the citizens in the city he grew up in. Councilor Scott asked what his past experience would be helpful to him as a firefighter and the candidate said he was able to get a behind the scenes look at what public safety personnel do during his employment in technology sales. Chair Rossetti commented on his education credentials and thinks that they will serve him well. She asked about the status of the city's residency requirement for firefighters and Chief Breen said that the requirement is that a candidate be a resident of Somerville for 1 year prior to taking the exam, but once employed in the department, there is no residency requirement.

Chair Rossetti confirmed that the candidate received and understood the notice of possible executive session and was willing to enter into executive session. She then made a motion to enter into executive session. That motion was laid on the table until all of tonight's open session interviews were completed.

After the last candidate was interviewed in open session, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the above stated reason at 8:36 PM and returned to the regular meeting at 8:59 PM. Chair Rossetti announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to return to the regular meeting.

Chair Rossetti's motion to approve this item was approved on a unanimous roll call vote. The candidate was advised that the committee's recommendation would be before the City Council on May 13th for approval.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

**211738: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Daniel Higgins to the position of Reserve Firefighter.**

Chief Breen introduced the candidate and Chair Rossetti informed the him that he was free to make opening and closing statements, if desired, and would be interviewed in open session and in Executive Session and would then return to open session to conclude the interview.

The candidate told the committee that he waited far too long to not attempt to get the position being offered and said that he joined the Georgetown Fire Department to get experience.

Chair Rossetti, noting that the candidate has already completed the academy training, asked if he could begin after his appointment and Chief Breen explained that he might have to do a couple of weeks of training, however, he can't begin employment until candidate Colbert begins the academy, since candidate Colbert is ahead of this candidate on the civil service list. The candidate said he will stay employed in Nashua until his appointment here is official, adding that the Nashua department is aware that he may be leaving.

Chair Rossetti confirmed that the candidate received and understood the notice of possible executive session and was willing to enter into executive session. She then made a motion to enter into executive session. That motion was laid on the table until all of tonight's open session interviews were completed.

After the last candidate was interviewed in open session, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the above stated reason at 8:36 PM and returned to the regular meeting at 8:59 PM. Chair Rossetti announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to return to the regular meeting.

Chair Rossetti's motion to approve this item was approved on a unanimous roll call vote. The candidate was advised that the committee's recommendation would be before the City Council on May 13th for approval.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

**211739: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Jason Kenney to the position of Reserve Firefighter.**

Chief Breen introduced the candidate and Chair Rossetti informed the him that he was free to make opening and closing statements, if desired, and would be interviewed in open session and in Executive Session and would then return to open session to conclude the interview.

The candidate stated that he was living in Somerville when he took the exam March 2018. Asked how the department could be improved, the candidate stated that every fire department brings something to the table, so it's difficult to say. He noted that firefighting is different in the south and he's looking forward to seeing the differences here.

Chair Rossetti asked the candidate to make some time to return to the high school to speak to students and remind them that he was in their place not too long ago and to give them encouragement and motivation to work hard for what they want. Chief Breen noted that this candidate would not have to attend the fire academy. The candidate will continue to work in North Carolina until he gets the official word for the position here.

Chair Rossetti confirmed that the candidate received and understood the notice of possible executive session and was willing to enter into executive session. She then made a motion to enter into executive session. That motion was laid on the table until all of tonight's open session interviews were completed.

After the last candidate was interviewed in open session, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the above stated reason at 8:36 PM and returned to the regular meeting at 8:59 PM. Chair Rossetti announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to return to the regular meeting.

Chair Rossetti's motion to approve this item was approved on a unanimous roll call vote. The candidate was advised that the committee's recommendation would be before the City Council on May 13th for approval.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

**211740: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Sean Marquis to the position of Reserve Firefighter.**

Chief Breen introduced the candidate and Chair Rossetti informed the him that he was free to make opening and closing statements, if desired, and would be interviewed in open session and in Executive Session and would then return to open session to conclude the interview.

Councilor Scott asked the candidate if his past experience came up during his interview. The candidate noted that he has some first aid knowledge, acquired during his 6 years as a lifeguard. Asked what excites him about being a firefighter he said that he doesn't feel fulfilled in his present career path and he wants to give back to the community. Chair Rossetti asked about his frequent job changes and the candidate explained why this occurred, adding that he doesn't like to bounce around and this is where he wants to be. He said that firefighting was in his family and that this career isn't something you fall back into - it's something you choose.

Chair Rossetti confirmed that the candidate received and understood the notice of possible executive session and was willing to enter into executive session. She then made a motion to enter into executive session. That motion was laid on the table until all of tonight's open session interviews were completed.

After the last candidate was interviewed in open session, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the above stated reason at 8:36 PM and returned to the regular meeting at 8:59 PM. Chair Rossetti announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to return to the regular meeting.

Chair Rossetti's motion to approve this item was approved on a unanimous roll call vote. The candidate was advised that the committee's recommendation would be before the City Council on May 13th for approval.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]</b>
<b>AYES:</b>	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

**Referenced Material:**

- Cert 06668 - Signatures (with 211736, 211737, 211738, 211739, 211740)