

*Sycamore Fire and Police Commission  
Minutes*

*June 27, 2006*

The meeting was called to order at 1:36 p.m.

In attendance were Chairman Samantha Dailey, Commissioner Ron Short, Commissioner Appointee Jeff Petersen, who would be officially appointed at the July 3, 2006 Council meeting, Fire Chief Bill Riddle, Police Chief Don Thomas, and City Attorney Marcy Buick.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion**

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes:	2
Nays:	0
Abstain:	0

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**Motion**

A motion to approve the minutes from the June 1, 2006 meeting, as written, was made by Commissioner Short and seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes:	2
Nays:	0
Abstain:	0

**COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. Fire and Police Commission Training**

Chairman Dailey reported that the Commission had received information about a half-day training session for Fire and Police Commissioners that is scheduled to take place at the IML Conference in September. She reminded everyone that this was different than the conference that is offered twice a year by the State Fire and Police Commission, once in the spring and once in the fall. Recording Secretary Tritle added that these conferences last several days and are excellent, as the hiring laws and eligibility requirements are reviewed.

## OLD BUSINESS

### A. Status on Testing Process for Entry-level Firefighters

Chairman Dailey reported that the written exam has been scheduled to take place on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Recording Secretary Tritle explained that they would need to go to the Sycamore Library on the afternoon of July 14<sup>th</sup> to set up the room for the exam. The Library will open on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. The candidates have been instructed to register between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. Orientation will begin at 9:00 a.m.; candidates who arrive after orientation begins will be disqualified. The written exam will begin once the orientation session is completed. Chairman Dailey asked what topics are discussed at orientation. Chief Riddle answered that they talk about the Sycamore Fire Department and what they expect of their Firefighters. Chairman Dailey asked if the Commissioners explain how the testing process works, or if Chief Riddle does this as well. Recording Secretary Tritle answered that one of the Commissioners would do this. She asked if Chairman Dailey would explain the changes the Commissioners recently made to the preference point structure, or if Chief Riddle would do this. Chairman Dailey answered that she would prefer that Chief Riddle explain the preference points to the candidates, since he is more familiar with how they are applied.

Recording Secretary Tritle reported that they had given out 38 applications and had received 36 back. She explained that, in prior years, the Commissioners reviewed each application to ascertain if the applicants met the qualifications to take the exam. She asked the Commissioners if they wanted to take the time to review the applications or if they wanted her and Chief Riddle to do this. The Commissioners answered that they would prefer that Chief Riddle and Recording Secretary Tritle do this review. Recording Secretary Tritle stated that the application packet also explained that the candidates were to turn in copies of their certifications and transcripts along with their applications; approximately one-third of the candidates had not done this. She said that, in the letter she would be sending to the candidates to remind them about the date for orientation and the written exam, she told the candidates that these items must be turned in by that date. She wondered what the Commissioners wanted to do about those candidates who did not turn them in by that deadline. Chief Riddle suggested that the candidates be told on the day of the written exam that, if they had not yet done so, these items must be turned in by the time they took their oral exam, or they would be disqualified. Recording Secretary Tritle asked the Commissioners for their thoughts on this, adding that it is especially important that the candidates turn in copies of their FF II and EMT-P certifications so that the Commissioners know for sure that the candidates have met these qualifications. Commissioner Short asked what procedure the Commissioners had followed in the past. Recording Secretary Tritle answered that applications are reviewed to ascertain that each candidate meets the age and education requirements and that they have completed their applications properly. If they have not, they are notified that they are disqualified. Chief Riddle said that they did not require copies of the certifications be turned in with the applications in the past and this made more work for Recording Secretary Tritle who had to chase after the candidates to turn these items at the time of a job offer. Chairman Dailey asked if there would be any legal issues if the Commissioners were to disqualify candidates who did not turn in copies of their certifications at the requested time. City Attorney Buick asked if there was a rule that states that this must be done. Recording Secretary Tritle answered that it is not in the Rules and Regulations, but it is something that the Commission does need to verify that a candidate has met the necessary qualifications; it is not enough that a candidate writes on his or her application that he or

she is a FF II/Paramedic. Recording Secretary Tritle added that it is also a good test to see which candidates can follow written instructions, especially since it was stated on the application packet in bold print that copies of the required certifications and transcripts must be submitted along with the application. Commissioner Short asked if candidates was instructed to submit an official copy of their transcripts, adding that it could take a college or university two to four weeks to fill this request. Recording Secretary Tritle answered that she had not specified that an official transcript be submitted, as she knows that students can now obtain a copy of their transcripts on-line. Chairman Dailey said that a copy should be fine. Commissioner Short said that it did not seem necessary for candidates to have a copy of their transcripts in order to take the written exam. Therefore, he thought that having them turn these items in by the time of their oral exam would be an appropriate deadline. Chairman Dailey agreed with this.

Chairman Dailey stated that the Commissioners needed to decide how they would determine the candidates who would go on to the oral interviews; in other words, would they interview the top “x”% or would they interview the top 20 candidates. Recording Secretary Tritle added that the Commissioners also needed to determine what combined score would be needed for a candidate to qualify for the initial list. She explained that when they gave the written exam for entry-level Police Officers last summer, the Commissioners did not inform the candidates that they needed a certain score to make the initial list; therefore, candidates who had a combined score that was less than 70% are on the initial list. Chief Thomas suggested that the Commissioners have several options: they could tell the candidates that they need to score at least 70% on the written exam in order to qualify for an oral interview. Of the candidates who meet this requirement, the Commissioners could choose to interview the top 25% or the top 25, whichever is greater (or lesser). Chief Riddle stated that, since they had only received 36 applications, he would like to see the top 20 people interviewed. Chairman Dailey said that she would like the Commission to establish a firm policy as to how many candidates will be interviewed, instead of debating this issue every time a test is administered. Chief Thomas stated that he agreed with Chief Riddle’s recommendation, however he would look at the top 20 scores instead of the top 20 candidates. Commissioner Short stated that this would make it pretty definitive as to who would move on to the oral interviews, but wondered what would happen if the written exam did not produce 20 candidates or 20 scores. Chief Thomas answered that, in this case, only those candidates who passed would be interviewed, as he does not believe that the Commissioners would want a candidate who only scored, for example, 50%. He added that this could be considered an emergency situation, which would then allow the Commissioners to do lateral-entry hiring. Chief Riddle said that the Commissioners would also have the option of re-testing in this case. Chief Thomas said another option would be for the Commissioners to interview all candidates who pass the written exam. Commissioner Short suggested that the candidates be told that everyone who scores a 70% or better on the written exam will be considered for an oral interview, but wondered what would happen if a large number of candidates passed. He asked if, in this case, a cut off point of 80% or better would be needed to cut down the number of candidates who would move on to the oral interviews. Chief Thomas answered that the Commissioners could announce a certain score that would be needed in order for a candidate to move on to the oral interview, for example 70%. Once the Commissioners see the actual numbers, they can establish two tiers of candidates – those who will be interviewed now and those who will be interviewed once the first tier is exhausted. He added that this is the method used by the Fire and Police Commission in St. Charles. Chief Riddle stated that he liked the idea of telling the candidates that they would be considered for an oral interview if they scored a certain

number on the written exam. Chief Thomas explained that, if the Commissioners used this terminology, they could decide how many candidates to interview after they see the breakdown of the written exam scores. Commissioner Short stated that he also liked this idea, as it gave the Commissioners freedom to make the decision each time a test is given, rather than using one number that will apply to all testing processes. Chief Thomas explained that the last time they administered the written exam for entry-level Police Officers, approximately 30 candidates scored 70% or better. He wanted the Commission to interview at least 25 of these candidates, but they chose only to interview 15, which ended up producing a final list that was “okay” but could have been better. Recording Secretary Tritle asked, if the Commissioners told the candidates that those who score 70% or better would be considered for an interview, would they be obligated to communicate the criteria they used to pick the candidates who go on in the process, as those who score above 70% and were not interviewed would wonder why they were not considered. City Attorney Buick stated that she did not see why the Commission could not do as they saw fit, unless there is something in the State Statutes that dictates otherwise. Chief Tomas answered that he believes the Commissioners have a lot of leeway in this matter. Chairman Dailey asked Chief Thomas if, under the tiered system, there are a set number of candidates in each tier. Chief Thomas answered that, every time he has seen this done, the Commissioners did exactly what the Sycamore Commissioners did the last time an exam was given; they looked at the numbers and decided that they did not have the time to interview 20 people – they said they only have time for 10. This established the two tiers – the first tier contained the 10 candidates interviewed and the second tier consisted of the remaining candidates who scored over 70%. Once the top 10 candidates are hired or eliminated, the Commissioners would interview the candidates in the second tier to establish another list. He added that he has gone through several testing cycles during his tenure with the City of Sycamore, and each time the Commissioners selected a different number of candidates to interview; the only criteria used to determine this number was the time that they wanted to take to conduct the interviews. Chief Thomas told the Commissioners that he would like to see them interview everyone who passes the written exam. Commissioner Short answered that this sounded reasonable to him. Chief Riddle also agreed. Chairman Dailey stated that she liked the idea of telling the candidates that those who score 70% or better on the written exam will be considered for an oral interview. Once the scores are received, the Commissioners can then determine how many of the candidates will go on to the oral interviews.

Recording Secretary Tritle asked if the candidates will be told that their combined score must be a certain number in order for them to be placed on the final eligibility list. She added that, if the Commissioners do not do this, candidates with a combined score of less than 70% could end up on the list. Chief Thomas suggested that the candidates be told that they must pass both components of the exam; that way, if the Commissioners interview a candidate that they do not like, and he or she scores 95% on the written exam, they could then score this candidate low on the oral exam. If the Commissioners use an aggregate score as their criteria, this candidate could still make the initial list. If, however, the scores of each exam are considered separately, this candidate can then be weeded out of the process. Chief Riddle agreed with Chief Thomas on this issue. Chairman Dailey stated that the candidates will be told they must score 70% or better on both the oral and written exams in order to be placed on the final list and that this will be the rule that the Commissioners use for this test and all future testing processes. She added that tiers would not be mentioned in this case.

Recording Secretary Tritle mentioned that one of the applicants had neglected to submit one of the pages from his application packet. She asked the Commissioners if they would disqualify this candidate for submitting an incomplete application, or if they would allow him to fill out the missing page at orientation. Commissioner Short answered that he did not think the applicant should be disqualified and suggested that the missing page be mailed to the candidate to complete. Chief Thomas added that the Police Standards Board has issued a standard that states that no one will be eliminated from the process due to a small administrative mistake, and they recommend that, if someone turns in an application that is missing a page or a certificate, they be given one chance to fix this. Commissioner Short suggested that all of these steps be written up and put into a procedures manual. Chief Thomas said that he did help write one when he was in St. Charles, because they had many of these same problems. Recording Secretary Tritle asked City Attorney Buick if her office could update the Sycamore Fire and Police Rules and Regulations to include the amendment that was recently passed regarding preference points for entry-level Firefighters and also print a copy for each of the Commissioners. City Attorney Buick answered that she would.

Chairman Dailey explained that the Training Room in the Public Safety Building had been reserved from 1:00 – 4:30 p.m. on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> for the oral interviews. She added that we could add another day to this, if necessary, depending on how many candidates they decided to interview. Recording Secretary Tritle asked if she should reserve the Training Room on August 4<sup>th</sup> as well. Chairman Dailey answered that she should, just to be on the safe side.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Approval of Bills**

Recording Secretary Tritle reported that there are three new bills totaling \$426.72:

- \$45.00 from Government Jobs.com to advertise the Firefighter exam
- \$371.73 from The Chronicle to advertise the Firefighter exam
- \$9.99 for a case to store closed session meeting audio tapes

### **Motion**

A motion to approve the payment of the bills was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

### **Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

### **B. Fire Chief**

Chief Riddle reported that Firefighter Eric Walker would be finishing his probationary period in 30 days. He would send a letter to the Commissioner to this effect.

**C. Police Chief**

Chief Thomas stated that he had two issues to discuss with the Commissioners, which he thought would best be addressed in closed session. He also wished to report, for the record, that, of the last three hires made in his Department, one (Stacy Safranek) is at the Academy and doing very well. She is about halfway through her twelve-week class. The other two (Ann Carlson and Tiffany O'Neill) have finished the field training program and are doing very well on the street. Recording Secretary Tritle asked how Officer Rudi Ziegler was doing. Chief Thomas reported that he is a very solid Officer; he is quiet with a strong presence. Chief Thomas added that the top candidates on the current list were all excellent and commended Chairman Dailey and the two prior Commissioners for the excellent job they did in establishing the list. He added, however, that they were now encountering challenges with the remaining candidates on this list.

**CLOSED SESSION**

**Motion**

A motion to move into closed session was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

Closed session began at 2:00 p.m.

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

**Motion**

A motion to return to open session was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

Open session reconvened at 2:35 p.m.

**Motion**

A motion to terminate the employment of Police Officer Corinne Calame was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

Recording Secretary Tritle said that she had put together a letter to send to Corinne and that City Attorney Buick had already looked it over. Chairman Dailey asked if anyone should call Corinne, or if she would find out through receipt of this letter that she had been officially terminated. Chief Thomas answered that the Commissioners could choose to either call her themselves or have the Human Resources Director or himself do it. Commissioner Short answered that, since Corinne reported to him, he thought Chief Thomas would be the best person to call her. Chief Thomas agreed that he would make the call to inform Corinne that today was her last workday with the Sycamore Police Department. Recording Secretary Tritle verified that June 27, 2006 would be her termination date. Chief Thomas verified that this was correct. Recording Secretary Tritle stated that Corinne did not work long enough to be eligible for any City benefits. Chairman Dailey asked when benefits take effect. Recording Secretary Tritle answered that they start 30 days after employment.

Chairman Dailey explained that the Commissioners now needed to move forward and offer a letter of employment to the next candidate on the eligibility list. Chief Thomas identified this candidate as David Bulthuis.

**Motion**

A motion to offer a letter of employment to David Bulthuis was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

Commissioner Short recommended that a physical fitness exam be made a part of the background exam that that is performed on candidates for the position of Police Officer.

**Motion**

A motion make a physical fitness exam a part of the background check that is performed on candidates for the position of Police Officer was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

**Vote**

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

Commissioner Short reiterated that he thought it would be a good idea to put together some sort of policy and procedures manual for the Commissioners to refer to for testing and hiring. Chief Thomas suggested that he and Recording Secretary Tritle work on this. Commissioner Short

recommended that Chief Riddle also be involved in putting a manual together. Recording Secretary Tritle said that City Attorney Foster had put together a handout that outlines the testing and hiring procedures for the Police and Fire Departments and wondered if Commissioner Short had seen this document. Commissioner Short answered that he did not see this in the binder of materials that he was given. Recording Secretary Tritle stated again that it would be helpful for the new Commissioners to have an updated copy of the Sycamore Fire and Police Commission Rules and Regulations, since they had recently been amended. Commissioner Short said it might be helpful to get a copy of a different municipality's procedure manual to use as a guide in putting together a manual for the Sycamore Fire and Police Commission. Chairman Dailey suggested that a condensed version (a "cheat sheet") of the procedures would be very helpful. Chief Thomas said that he and Recording Secretary Tritle would work with City Attorney Foster to put something together.

Commissioner Short stated that it sounds as though the Police Department has recently had some great hires, adding that he would like to find a way to weed out any mediocre candidates who are on the current list. Chief Thomas answered that his Department will conduct a very stringent background exam on the remaining candidates and, based upon the results, will make recommendations that will insure that they bring in the best candidates that they can. Commissioner Short wondered if there weren't some indicators, besides credit reports that can be used to weed out candidates, such as the number of speeding tickets a candidate had received. Chief Thomas answered that they are not done refining this process and, if the current trend in candidates continues, he will be making a strong recommendation to the Commissioners. Recording Secretary Tritle asked if speeding tickets could be held against a candidate. Commissioner Short answered that he thought they could, if the candidate was convicted. Chief Thomas answered that anything can be held against a candidate, as long as we are very sure of the facts; a conviction is a very strong fact. However, he did not believe that a candidate could be eliminated for multiple speeding tickets. Recording Secretary Tritle asked how a candidate who had indicated on his application that he was charged with assault but never convicted would fair in a background check. Chief Thomas answered that he would want more facts, such as looking at the Police reports to see why the candidate was not convicted before he would make a recommendation to the Commission as to whether or not this candidate should be hired. It could turn out that the candidate was innocent of the charges. Commissioner Short added that there are things that candidates may have done that have been expunged from their records; the Commission would never know about these. He wondered what the best process would be to find the top candidates. Recording Secretary Tritle stated that she felt the Commission had already taken a step in improving the process, since they were now conducting the oral interviews rather than hiring I/O Solutions to do it. She explained that including members of the Fire and Police Departments on the respective oral interview teams has helped the Commissioners to find the best candidates, since the Department members can give insights to the Commissioners as to what they are looking for in the candidates. Chief Thomas added that a thorough background exam contributes to this as well. Chairman Dailey stated that one or two speeding tickets may not point to a bad candidate; however, if these are added to other details, such as suspensions or the fact that a candidate has job hopped, then they may want to look twice at this candidate. Chief Thomas stated that the Commissioners would have the right to say that a candidate having one or two suspensions is, in their consideration, an inappropriate candidate. He added that a credit history combined with a work history might also be unacceptable. He also stated that the Commissioners do not even need to explain their reasons for dismissing a candidate that they deem unacceptable unless they are sued, and the only way they would be sued is if they disclosed the reason why publicly. All they are required to do is state in closed session that they do not like what they see and they will not be offering this candidate a job – period. Commissioner Short asked if they see any of these reports before they offer a candidate a job. Chief Thomas replied

that they would not have these reports completed when a tentative job offer is given, though they are ready for them to review prior to sending a candidate a final job offer. He explained that the Commissioners do have the right to allow the Police Department to begin the background checks earlier in the hiring process, so that any red flags would be discovered before the tentative offer was sent to the candidate. He said that the Commissioners should decide what information they would like to see prior to sending a tentative job offer, and he will get this information to them. Commissioner Short answered that, as a new Commissioner, he would like to know what criteria he should be using when making the decision as to whether or not to hire a candidate. Chief Thomas said that they have started the background on the next candidate and have found no automatic impediments to hiring him in the information they have obtained to date. However, for example, if they had discovered that there was an arrest warrant issued for the candidate, the Chief would have brought this to the Commissioners in a report that would include a copy of the arrest warrant and a recommendation not to hire this candidate. Chairman Dailey said that we would have to wonder about our standards if we were to hire a candidate with this type of history. Commissioner Short agreed, but added that people do make mistakes and we should make some allowances for that.

### ADJOURNMENT

#### Motion


A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Short and was seconded by Chairman Dailey.

#### Vote

Ayes: 2  
Nays: 0  
Abstain: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Minutes accepted by:

  
Samantha Dailey, Chairman

8/7/06  
Date

Attest:

  
Jean Tritle, Recording Secretary

8/7/06  
Date