

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In the Matter of Jose Berrios, Deputy Fire Chief (PM2641V), Camden

CSC Docket No. 2019-828

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: NOVEMBER 2, 2018 (SLK)

Jose Berrios appeals his score for the promotional examination for Deputy Fire Chief (PM2641V), Camden. It is noted that the appellant passed the examination with a final average of 86.570 and ranked second on the resultant eligible list.

The subject promotional examination was held on April 26, 2018 and four candidates passed. This was an oral examination designed to generate behaviors similar to those required for success in a job. The examination consisted of four scenario-based oral exercises; each was developed to simulate tasks and assess the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) important to job performance. These exercises covered four topic areas: 1) Incident Command – Non-Fire 2) Supervision, 3) Administration, and 4) Incident Command – Fire.

The candidates' responses were scored on technical knowledge and oral communication ability. Prior to the administration of the exam, a panel of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined the scoring criteria, using generally approved fire command practices, fire fighting practices, and reference materials. Scoring decisions were based on SME-approved possible courses of action (PCAs) including those actions that must be taken to resolve the situation as presented. For a performance to be acceptable in the technical component for some scenarios, a candidate needed to present the mandatory courses of action for that scenario. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process.

Candidates were given ten minutes to respond to each question. Candidate responses to each question were rated on a five-point scale (1 to 5) from nil response through optimum. The appellant received a score of 2 for the technical component for the Administration scenario and a 4 for the Incident Command – Fire scenario, and challenges the PCAs for these scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

The Administration scenario concerned a recent suspicious fire where the fire investigator entered the building through a boarded-up door to conduct the investigation. While operating in the building, the investigator was injured and unable to self-evacuate. The fire chief directed the appellant to review and update the department's policy pertaining to fire investigations and safety procedures during fire investigations.

The assessor noted that the appellant missed opportunities to (1) document and collect evidence in plain view of firefighters during operations, (2) receive permission from the building owner to enter building if returning to the scene, and (3) obtain the search/administrative warrant to collect evidence and to conduct a detailed search of the building. On appeal, the appellant indicated that he stated he should collect and document evidence to ensure chain of custody is maintained so that it is admissible in court.

The Incident Command – Fire scenario concerned a fire alarm for a commercial self-storage building.

The assessor noted that the appellant missed an opportunity to gain entry/force entry to the building. On appeal, the appellant stated that he indicated that Ladder 1 should be used to force entry to conduct a search and rescue.

CONCLUSION

A review of the appellant's Administration scenario presentation indicates that he documented and collected evidence. As such, the appellant's score for this component should be raised from 2 to 3.

A review of the appellant's Incident Command – Fire scenario presentation indicates that he stated that Ladder 1 should be used to force entry. As such, the appellant's score for this component should be raised from a 4 to 5.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be granted, and the appellant's score for the technical component for the Administration scenario be raised from a 2 to a 3 and for the Incident Command – Fire be raised from a 4 to a 5.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ON THE 31st DAY OF OCTOBER, 2018

Deirdré L. Webster Cobb

Chairperson

Civil Service Commission

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