



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

**FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of Lisa Hartman, Zoo
Curator (C0763C), Essex County

CSC Docket No. 2022-2905

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: January 18, 2023 (BS)

Lisa Hartman appeals the determination of the Division of Agency Services (Agency Services) that she did not meet the education requirement for the open competitive examination for Zoo Curator (C0763C), Essex County.

The examination at issue was announced with specific requirements that had to be met as of the December 21, 2021 closing date. Specifically, all applicants had to possess a Bachelor’s degree in Zoology, Biology, Animal Husbandry, Animal Behavior, Animal Science or closely related field from an accredited college or university, plus four years of experience in work involving animal nutrition, taxonomy, animal behavior, parasitology, bacteriology, or zoology. The examination announcement also stipulated that a Master’s degree in Zoology, Biology, Animal Husbandry, Animal Behavior, Animal Science or other closely related field could be substituted for one year of experience. No experience substitution was allowed in lieu of a degree in one of the required subject areas. The subject examination was cancelled, effective April 2, 2022, as the appellant was the only applicant.

The appellant submitted an application on which she indicated that she possessed more than 10 years of applicable experience as a provisional Zoo Curator and Hospital Keeper, and Zoo Keeper, with the appointing authority; and as an Assistant Director/General Curator with LEO Zoological Conservation; and as a Curator with Animal Kingdom Zoo. The appellant did not possess a degree in one of the required subject areas nor did she possess any college credits. As a result, Agency Services found the appellant to be below the minimum requirements in education.

On appeal, the appellant argues that her experience far exceeded the degree requirement. In fact, she asserts, if one year of experience was considered to equal 30 college credits, her experience far exceeds this. The appellant further asserts that she possessed in excess of 25 years of relevant experience. In addition, Jilian Fazio, the Director, Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, submitted a letter on the appellant's behalf indicating that the appellant had extensive background in animal behavioral husbandry and superb leadership skills. Director Fazio stated that, in fact, the appellant's experience included over 25 years of "hands on" animal husbandry and management experience which included work with more than 200 species of exotic animals. This experience involved breeding introductions which resulted in the successful reproduction of more than 50 different species as well as work in creating habitat. Additionally, Director Fazio emphasized that the appellant possessed extensive supervisory experience which demonstrated her capabilities to manage, direct, and supervise a large facility and staff. Director Fazio contended that the appellant's resume indicated that she was more than qualified to service as Zoo Curator at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo.

CONCLUSION

N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.3(b)2 requires applicants to possess all the requirements specified in an announcement for an open competitive examination by the closing date. Further, *N.J.A.C.* 4A:1-1.2(c) states that the Civil Service Commission (Commission) may relax a rule for good cause in order to effectuate the purposes of Title 11A, New Jersey Statutes.

Initially, it is noted that Agency Services correctly determined that the appellant lacked the required education. However, it cannot be ignored that the job specification for Zoo Curator indicates that incumbents in this title supervise animal and animal care/breeding programs, as well as activities and staff in a zoological park; ensure that zoo animals have the correct living environment, diets and overall care; organize animal care programs and periodically checks mammals, birds, and reptiles, and their zoo environment to ensure proper execution of the program; test, monitor, and inspect food purchased for zoo animals to ensure proper quality and appropriate diets; and perform macro and microscopic studies on specimens of animal feces, nasal exudates, and skin scrapings and identifies the extent of any parasite infestations, among other related duties. A review of the appellant's application and resume reveals that she possesses over 25 years of such experience.

While it is true that the appellant does not possess a completed Bachelor's degree in one of the stipulated subject areas, the Commission finds that it is now appropriate to admit her based upon the totality and quality of her 25 years of experience working in this field. In this regard, the record evidences that the examination situation is not competitive since the subject open-competitive

examination was cancelled as the appellant was the only applicant. Although the appellant lacks a required degree in one of the required subject areas, the Commission is satisfied that the totality of her 25 years of “hands on” experience working specifically in the areas covered in the job specification for Zoo Curator warrants her admission to the subject examination. *See In the Matter of Suzanne DeLorenzo, Supervisor of Laboratories, Clinical and Water Analysis (M0725B), Passaic Valley Water Commission (CSC; decided March 2, 2022).*

Moreover, the dual purpose of the Civil Service system is to ensure efficient public service for State and local governments and to provide appointment and advancement opportunities to Civil Service employees based on their merit and abilities. These interests are best served when more, rather than fewer, individuals are presented with employment opportunities. *See Communications Workers of America v. New Jersey Department of Personnel*, 154 N.J. 121 (1998). Therefore, based on the totality of the circumstances in this matter, good cause exists to admit the appellant to the examination.

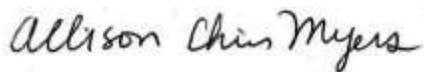
It is noted that this remedy is limited to the particular circumstances of this matter and does not set a precedent in any other matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be granted, the examination announcement cancellation be rescinded, and that the appellant’s application be processed for current employment opportunities.

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 18TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2023



Allison Chris Myers
Acting Chairperson
Civil Service Commission

Inquiries
and
Correspondence

Nicholas F. Angiulo
Director
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
Civil Service Commission
Written Record Appeals Unit
P.O. Box 312
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0312

c: Lisa Hartman
Jilian Fazio
Division of Agency Services
Records Center