



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
TONI N. HARP
MAYOR

CITY HALL

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

MICHAEL A. CARTER
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

165 CHURCH ST.
NEW HAVEN, CT 06510
(203) 946-7900
FAX (203) 946-7911

March 30, 2015

Ms. Noelia Marcano, Secretary
Civil Service Board
City of New Haven
200 Orange Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Dear Ms. Marcano:

I am writing this letter to the City of New Haven Civil Service Board to request that the Board consider a change to its rules that would permit the extension of Civil Service List #13-14 beyond the two year maximum duration for the reasons set forth below.

Over the past twelve months, the City of New Haven Fire Department has made great strides to replenish its ranks by seating two entry level Firefighter classes, something we have not accomplished since 2008. Efforts are currently underway to seat a third class slated for July 2015.

The current list was certified in July 2013, but due to the time intensive nature of completing background checks and other requirements needed once conditional job offers have been made, we were not able to seat the first class until June 2014 – almost a year after the list was approved. We have made some improvements in our management of the screening process and were able to shorten the amount of time needed to seat a second class in January 2015 but going forward it will be prudent to allow at least six months from the time a conditional offer is made until the class is seated.

There are several significant benefits to extending this list. Over 3,000 persons took the test in 2013 and approximately 1,100 passed with a score of 70 or better. The City's efforts to recruit, advertise, develop and administer this test took more than a year and cost in excess of \$300,000.

Benefits from extending the list include:

- **Test Cost Savings** – Having invested over \$300,000 in the existing test, the City would like to maximize the number of applicants that can be hired from it. To undertake a new recruitment and hiring process now would require payment of overtime for recruitment, consultant fees for test development and administration, costs for applicant workshops at Gateway Community College, advertisement, brochures and other test-related expenses. This process takes 12 to 18 months from start to completion; and entails a significant investment.
- **Overtime and Salary Savings** – The more quickly the City can move to hire Firefighters, the more quickly we can realize overtime and salary savings. Using the existing list to hire new firefighters, who will start with lower salaries, benefits and pension costs, means the City can realize savings sooner rather than later. These savings do not include the immediate impact of reducing overtime costs. With the initial 43 new firefighters who completed their training in late December 2013, the impact on overtime is a reduction from a high of \$ 264,000 per week down to \$116,000 per week. A second class will yield even more overtime reductions and fill vacancies so that the department is not spending a significant amount of time each day filling vacant positions on shifts. It is in the City's financial interest to continue to realize these savings by using the current list.
- **Time** – The amount of time needed to organize a test of this magnitude, including the RFP for a vendor (at least 6 months to a year to prepare, advertise and select), administering the test and certifying the list, could easily take a year.
- **Vacancies** – An extension of the current list will enable the City to hire individuals in a timely manner as retirements occur, many of which occur with just two weeks to thirty days' notice. If the current list expires on July 30, 2015 we will again fall behind in trying to move promptly to fill vacancies while a new list is generated.
- **Stability** – The Fire Department needs stability. We have made significant progress in filling vacancies but having to restart the entire entry level hiring process puts the City back at a disadvantage and would halt the hiring progress currently underway.
- **Potential** – In the history of the New Haven Fire Department, we have never had such an extensive list of eligible candidates for the entry level positions. Why let it go to waste when we are just now reaching the 200 and 300 level candidates whose scores are still very high? This list has enough candidates to seat a fourth class in January 2016 and a fifth class, if needed, in July 2016. There is also the potential to diversify the department in the years to come.

- **Training** – For the first time in eight years, the Fire Training Academy is fully staffed and prepared to train new firefighters. It would be a travesty to lose the opportunity to continue the training after years of disarray.
- **Continuity** - As new firefighters come in, there is a need to train new officers to lead them as well as develop those officers with routine entry classes and development classes for lieutenants, captains, battalion chiefs, and deputy chiefs. This will give the Fire Department the opportunity for succession planning and when there are retirements, it will not impact the command structure and level of service by pushing overtime to compensate for lack of staffing. Unplanned retirements decimate the firefighter and officer ranks. Within the current fire department, many firefighters are within one to three years of retirement.

There are enough names remaining on the current list to fill current and anticipated vacancies over the next two years and I am asking the Civil Service Commission to extend the expiration date of List #13-14 until July 30, 2017 for the reasons outlined.

The extension of this list is part of a larger process to gradually fix this critical public safety department and an opportunity for us to “heal” this City after years of budget cuts, legal proceedings and frustration surrounding Fire Department hiring and promotions. If you need further information, please feel free to contact me. I plan to attend the Board’s meeting on May 4 to discuss this request and respond to any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Carter
Chief Administrative Officer