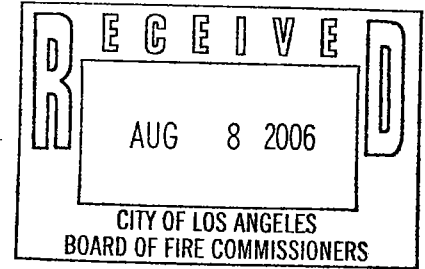


LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
FIRE CHIEF

BFC 06-075



August 8, 2006

TO: The Honorable Board of Fire Commissioners
City of Los Angeles

FROM: William R. Bamattre, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: FIRE COMMISSION REQUEST FOR WRITTEN POLICIES FOR
"THREE WHOLE SCORES" INTERVIEWS

SUMMARY

At its meeting of April 4, 2006, the Board requested that Department staff provide written policies for the "Three Whole Scores" interview processes currently in place and being utilized for sworn promotions.

FINDINGS

The Department entered into written agreements, through Letters of Agreement (LOA), with the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City (UFLAC) and the Chief Officers' Association (COA) to fill vacant positions following the process outlined in each of the LOAs (attached). The UFLAC LOA was signed on May 10, 1989, and applies only to appointments for positions in the classification of: Fire Captain, Fire Inspector, Engineer of Fire, Apparatus Operator, Fireboat Mate, and Fireboat Pilot. The COA LOA was signed on October 15, 1997, and applies when filling vacancies in the classification of: Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief and Deputy Chief.

The UFLAC LOA was entered into by the Personnel Department, Fire Department and UFLAC as part of the settlement of litigation arising out of or affected by the adoption of Proposed City Charter (Charter) Amendments at the April 12, 1983 Los Angeles City Municipal Election. The amendment resulted in a change to Article X, Section 1010 of the Charter, and the selection of candidates using the process of Three Whole Scores. Representatives of UFLAC, Department management, and the Personnel Department reached agreement on the LOA and the procedures the Fire Department would use to fill vacancies using the promotional eligible lists generated by the Personnel Department. These procedures are different from those used by Departments citywide.

The Charter details the responsibilities of the Personnel Department in the civil service examination process:

- Section 1008, establishing a register of eligible candidates
- Section 1009, promotion in the classified civil service
- Section 1010, certification [of an eligible list]

The process to establish lists to fill Department vacancies begins shortly after the Personnel Department offers a civil service examination (usually every two years) for a particular classification (i.e. Fire Captain, Battalion Chief), and makes available a register (list) of eligibles. The eligible list contains the names of all successful candidates in the civil service examination process. Candidates are ranked by the Personnel Department based on a numerical score (band). Candidates' final averages are calculated by combining their scores on each part of the examination according to its weight, adding seniority where appropriate. Candidates' final scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. All eligibles with the highest whole score are recorded in rank 1; those with the second highest whole score in rank 2, etc. Within each whole score rank, the names of eligibles are listed in random order.

Responsibility for using the eligible list generated by the Personnel Department to fill vacancies at the Fire Department is shared by two Bureaus: the Bureau of Training and Risk Management (BTRM) and the Administrative Services Bureau (ASB). To fill Fire Inspector vacancies, ASB works closely with the Fire Prevention Bureau. The selection process has become widely known in the Department as the "Three Whole Scores" process. This is somewhat of a misnomer since the process only borrows certain aspects of the Charter's Three Whole Scores process. Staff members in each of the above-mentioned bureaus are assigned specific duties as outlined below.

Responsibilities of the staff at BTRM:

Once the Personnel Department establishes an eligible list, the Assistant Chief assigned to the BTRM identifies the appropriate ranks and the members to serve on the Fire Department's Three Whole Score Interview Board. For example, when conducting Three Whole Score interviews for Fire Captain, the Interview Board will be comprised of a chairperson at the rank of Assistant Chief, and two members at the rank of Battalion Chief. Alternate members are also identified in case one of the Interview Board members is unable to participate in the process. The names of members selected to form the Interview Board are forwarded to the Fire Chief for final approval, and publicized so that candidates know the Interview Board members and will not access them during the life of the eligible list.

Joint responsibilities of the staff at BTRM and ASB Personnel Services Section (PSS):

BTRM and PSS staff determine which bands in the civil service eligible list will be interviewed based on forecasting the Department's attrition and deployment needs. The goal is to have enough candidates available for promotion as vacancies occur or as the Department is able to fill any new positions. This step is a clear departure from the selection process as it is described in the Charter where those individuals on an eligible list are interviewed each time there is a vacancy. Because the classifications represented by UFLAC are proprietary to the Department, that is, only the Fire Department uses these classifications, UFLAC representatives did not want their members to interview each time there was a vacancy, rather they wanted their members to interview just one time, receive a ranking within their band, and be promoted. Realizing that not all members would be successful in the process, the LOA contains provisions for a second interview at the twentieth month of the eligible list.

Responsibilities of the Interview Board:

The Interview Board is usually composed of three members and an alternate/alternates. With the assistance of PSS staff, the Interview Board is responsible for determining which rating factors are to be evaluated during the interview process. Examples of rating factors include: Emergency Incident Management; Personnel Management; and, Community Relations. The Interview Board develops interview questions and/or exercises based on the rating factors, and the skills, knowledge and abilities for the position. Point values are assigned to each rating factor. The skills, knowledge and abilities are delineated in the Class Specification; a document created by the Personnel Department anytime a new classification is added to the classified civil service. To evaluate each candidate on the basis of demonstrated performance, ability, education, and experience, the Interview Board reviews each candidate's resume, followed by a tape-recorded interview (the testing process may also include a written exercise), where the pre-selected rating factors are evaluated. During the interview, each candidate is asked questions and each interviewer provides written comments that substantiate each rating factor.

Responsibilities of the ASB:

Prior to the interviews, PSS is responsible for briefing the Interview Board, reviewing and approving the interview questions, notifying and scheduling all individuals selected to interview, generating the rating sheets to be used by the raters, preparing the audio tapes and providing the tape recorder, and maintaining all testing material. Prior to the interview, PSS staff sends each candidate the selection criteria for the position.

The selection criteria contain the skills, knowledge and abilities for the position. PSS staff may sit in during the interviews as observers of the process. After all interviews have been conducted, PSS reviews each candidate's interview materials and produces the rankings, prepares a list based on numerical rank, obtains final approval from the Fire Chief, and publicizes the information Department-wide. PSS sends a letter to those candidates who were not successful in the selection process listing the rating factors they received low marks on. Candidates are invited to meet with the Assistant Bureau Commander of the BTRM to go over the results of their interview. The narrative comments made by the raters are used to let the candidate know the areas identified by the raters as strengths and weaknesses. This information assists candidates to be successful when they interview a second time at the twentieth month of the list.

The process at the twentieth month entails the same responsibilities for each of the bureaus as when the list is first established, except that all candidates who were not successful the first time are invited to re-interview, and all candidates who were successful the first time are also invited to re-interview should they want to improve their interview score. Should they choose to re-interview, they keep the score they obtain during the twentieth month interview.

As vacancies occur, they are filled following the steps outlined in each of the LOAs.

UFLAC LOA

The UFLAC LOA was signed by Union and Department management in May of 1989 and is broken down into the following procedures:

- Procedures applying to all appointments – delineates the classes affected by the procedure: Fire Captain, Fire Inspector, Engineer of Fire, Apparatus Operator, Fireboat Mate, and Fireboat Pilot. Also makes provision for publication and distribution of list results.
- Procedures applying to appointments during the first twenty months of the eligible list – outlines the steps the Department will follow when making appointments from a promotional eligible list. Each member within a whole score is ranked and then appointments are made within that whole score on the basis of the ranking. All persons within a whole score are appointed unless bypassed. Provides an explanation of when a member may be bypassed, and for those members who are bypassed because they are found to be unsatisfactory, explains how they will be notified.

- Procedures applying to appointments during the final four months of the eligible list – from the list created by the Department's evaluation process, appointments will be made from the persons certified and available for appointment in the order of their ranking (in the Department's evaluation process), and in accordance with the Three Whole Score process of considering persons in the greatest number of whole scores legally certifiable. Provides an explanation of when a member may be bypassed, and for those members who are bypassed because they are found to be unsatisfactory, explains how they will be notified.

COA LOA

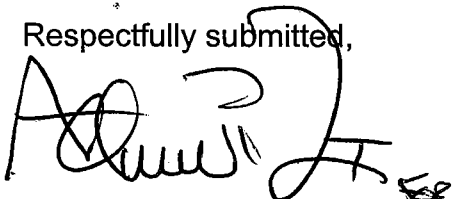
In October of 1997, Union and Department management signed the COA LOA. It outlines the procedures for filling vacant positions for Battalion, Assistant and/or Deputy Chief, including the make up of the interview board, the content of the selection criteria, the review process for the rating sheets, the responsibilities of the board members, and the candidates' order of appearance on the list. The Interview Boards for Battalion Chief and Assistant Chief are comprised of at least three Deputy Chiefs. The Interview Board for Deputy Chief positions are comprised of General Managers of at least two Fire Departments and at least one representative from the community.

The selection process from this list follows the City's Three Whole Score process wherein the Fire Chief must consider five more names for each individual vacancy in the top three whole scores. However, when there are multiple vacancies, he is limited to making appointments one vacancy at a time.

CONCLUSION

The internal process to fill sworn vacancies within the Department is outlined in LOAs signed with each employee organization representing those members.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William R. Bamattre', with a stylized flourish at the end.

WILLIAM R. BAMATTRE
Fire Chief