



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
CONFERENCE MEETING

#21-0711

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Chris Lagerbloom, ICMA-CM, City Manager

DATE: August 17, 2021

TITLE: Update on Diversity Recruitment Hiring for Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue
(Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

At the June 15, 2021 City Commission Conference Meeting, the City Commission discussed diversity recruitment hiring for Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue. The discussion was the result of a request from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) to jointly dissolve and vacate the remaining portion of a 1980 Consent Decree concerning the hiring and promotion of African-American firefighters.

In the most recent firefighter recruitment, sixteen applicants identifying as African-American satisfied position requirements and represented less than 7% of the total number of qualified applicants. Of these sixteen African-American applicants, eleven passed the required written examination and oral board interview. Three African-Americans in the top ranks were hired effective August 16, 2021. Although three African-Americans in a class of 24 slightly exceeds the Consent Decree's goal of 11%, the Human Resources Department and Fire Rescue Department recognize the need to create a recruitment plan and strategy that will increase the percentage of African-American candidates and the number considered for selection.

The Human Resources Department and Fire Rescue Department is prepared to immediately implement the following recruitment strategies and hiring practices:

1. Host a roundtable discussion with City of Fort Lauderdale African-American firefighters to identify barriers preventing underrepresented minorities from applying and ideas on how the City can attract, recruit, and increase the candidate pool.
2. Partner with the City's Chief Education Officer to develop a targeted program to include regular visits to schools in neighborhoods with high percentages of African-American residents. The goal of the program will be to generate interest in a career in the fire rescue service.

3. Request funding to operate and expand the Fire Explorer program.
4. Engage Strategic Communications to develop diverse images, videos, and communications to advertise and promote Fire Rescue recruitment initiatives and publicize such initiatives in print and social media.
5. Temporarily eliminate the swim test requirement as a condition of employment. Newly hired cadets will be required to pass a swim test within a reasonable time during cadet training. The reasonable time period will be determined upon coordination of resources. For those cadets who are unable to swim or need additional instruction to pass the swim test, Fort Lauderdale Ocean Rescue will offer lessons.
6. Temporarily eliminate the requirement for a paramedic certification as an absolute condition of employment. Applicants with an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification will be considered, and if selected, can pursue paramedic training and certification. The City's negotiated tuition reimbursement program can be utilized to cover the costs associated with paramedic licensure.
7. Reconfigure the oral board panels to include panelists from neighboring Fire Departments.
8. Implement a scoring system with passing scores in increments of five (i.e., 85, 90, 95, 100). This approach will not lower competency standards; a scoring system where candidates are separated by five points will increase the number of candidates in the top five ranks and eligible for selection.
9. Establish a mentorship program where City of Fort Lauderdale African-American firefighters can volunteer to serve as a resource to African-American cadets as they complete training and move towards becoming permanent City of Fort Lauderdale firefighters.
10. If necessary, retain a consultant to conduct a thorough review of the recruitment process and selection process.
11. Explore the development of a non-certified hiring initiative in partnership with Miami Dade College and Broward Fire Academy.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

Strategic Connections

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2024* Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Internal Support Focus Area

- Goal 7: Build a values-based organization dedicated to developing and retaining qualified employees
- Objective: Establish an organizational culture that fosters rewarding, professional careers

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035* Vision Plan: We Are United.

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