

Human Resources Committee

May 15, 2025

A meeting of the Human Resources Committee was held on this date, beginning at 4:00 p.m. in person in the Council Chambers at 80 Broad Street and over Zoom.

Committee Members: Councilmember Caroline Parker (Chair), Councilmember Stephen Bowden, Councilmember Robert Mitchell, Councilmember William Tinkler, and Mayor William Cogswell

Also Present: Heather Pope - Interim Director of Human Services, Jennifer Strickland - Compensation and HR Data Manager, Isabel Quattlebaum - HR Analyst, Lindsay Mazell - Talent Acquisition Manager, Amy Wharton, Cassandra Payton, David Griffin, Katie Dahlheim, Sgt. Joseph Harvill, Elizabeth Dieck, and Donna Constance

Chair Parker called the meeting to order.

Invocation: The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Chair Parker

Approval of the February 20, 2025 , minutes

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Mitchell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the February 20, 2025, Human Resources meeting minutes.

Old Business

CSI Committee Follow Up Discussion

Chair Parker asked if getting people to serve on the committee was difficult and if they had turnover.

Ms. Pope said that the 17 members included one non-voting chair, individuals from various departments, diverse employee classifications, and both supervisory and non-supervisory staff. They serve two-year terms. She mentioned they wanted to discuss this with the HR Director because people were leaving, and there was some turnover. Their goal is to ensure they are fully staffed, and if not, to work toward reaching that goal. Currently, department heads nominate someone, in coordination with the current members of the CSI Blue Team, and then the nomination goes to the Mayor for approval.

Chair Parker said they emphasized the importance of making it clear that this was a good system and ensuring that everyone could participate if they chose to.

Ms. Pope said they had received a total of 157 nominations, either through the submission of a nomination form or from the public via a customer comment card. They also received letters as well as the departments. They changed the system within the last five years to focus on both internal and external candidates, as people in the public were more easily recognized. However, there was not enough emphasis on internal customer service.

Sworn Hiring Discussion

Ms. Pope said Assistant Chief David Griffin and Sergeant Joseph Harvill were asked to provide additional information from both departments so they could share compatible data.

Chief Griffin said that in 2024, the Fire Department received 483 total applications, and 379 were complete. 104 of those applicants did not submit either a license, a transcript, or a resume, and 42 withdrew, leaving them with 337 that were complete. They had pre-academy events where 80 people went through the hiring process and RSVP'd for a ride-along or additional follow-up. 19 of them either did not show up for something they signed up for or did not sign up appropriately, 7 withdrew, 78 were disqualified, and 233 were sent a Signup Genius email for testing. 142 confirmed they would attend, and 38 did not show up. 104 attended the written exam, 88 passed, 1 was disqualified for cheating, 15 did not pass, and 88 remained after the exam. 82 remained after they ranked their scores, 47 job offers were extended, and 2 did not pass the physical or background check. 45 had started recruiting school, and 40 graduated.

Chair Parker thanked them for their data. It made her think about how competitive the program was and how they could fill those gaps. She said the application process made it seem they were doing a lot to recruit, but also to get hundreds of applicants. They would like to see those classes with recruits or candidates be higher, which would help with their staffing.

Ms. Pope said it was a capacity issue, as the training room held 45 people. This year, they have a larger facility that could accommodate 55 people.

Chief Griffin said that the trailer at the training tower is being upgraded to a triple-wide trailer to fit 60 people. For 2025, they received 565 applications, which is 100 more than last year. Of these, 433 applications were completed, increasing their completion rate to 76%. The national average for application completion is between 10% and 20% for regular jobs and around 50% for the fire service. Thirteen applicants were removed for no-shows at the pre-academy events, and 15 withdrew. Additionally, 92 were disqualified immediately, and 1 person joined the Fire Marshal Division and removed themselves from the process. A total of 312 people were invited to test; 122 did not RSVP, while 190 did. Based on these numbers and attrition estimates, they expect to hire 52 or as many as needed. Their attrition target is set for January 1, 2026. They anticipate 59 vacancies, but currently, there are 26 vacancies in operations and 4 in day shifts, totaling 30 vacancies. Out of 452 applicants, 422 positions are filled, and they plan to start with 472 people on July 1st.

Councilmember Mitchell asked if they were still experiencing a lack of minority applicants and if they were still visiting the schools.

Chief Griffin said they were not lacking, as they were. They had 30 females and 30 to 40 diverse males, which increased from last year. They were still going into schools, and Chief Michael Julazdeh was focused more on local schools that were more local to Charleston instead of a wider state search.

Chair Parker asked if this was a program they had just started at St. John's High School.

Chief Griffin said that was correct.

Chair Parker asked if they had or had not had anyone come out of that program.

Chief Griffin said they had not.

Sergeant Harvill reported that they received 238 applications, with 88 not advancing past the initial phase. Among those who tested, 34 withdrew from the process, 13 did not pass the FIS

Assessment, and 2 failed the post-examination. Five candidates did not qualify for the oral interview, and 32 did not pass the polygraph test based on their disclosures. In the final phase before reaching a conditional point in the overall testing, eight candidates did not pass the background investigation. Out of all candidates, 56 reached the qualified candidate stage, and 47 were hired in 2024. They conducted three classes a year for their basic law enforcement certification. Five candidates who began the 2024 process were hired in 2025. Four candidates did not complete the final offer process because they accepted other positions elsewhere.

New Business

Staffing and Retention Report

Ms. Quattlebaum said this was their first quarter turnover. The sworn Fire turnover decreased by 2.07%, police increased by 2.19%, and non-sworn increased by 3.79%. Out of the sworn officers that left the department, they had one retirement and eight voluntary resignations in the first quarter.

Next was the projection for the first quarter. They projected a 7.31% turnover for Fire, a 9.08% for police, and a 14.3% for non-sworn.

Next, the first quarter's sworn staffing levels. Fire was down 1%, and at the end of quarter 1, they had 52 open firefighters and training positions open, which would be filled when they attended orientation on July 21st. The Police Department staffing was up compared to this time last year, even with the higher turnover rate.

Next were the non-sworn vacancy rates. The BFRC and Clerk of Council showed no change compared to the last quarter, at the end of 2024. The Executive Department increased by 3%, and non-sworn fire rose by 6%. Housing decreased by 5%, but they were working to fill those positions. Human Resources went up by 5% after they filled a vacancy with a temporary worker. IT increased by 2%, while Livability and Tourism saw a 7% increase. The Parks Department remained unchanged, as they had 4 temporary workers filling their groundskeeper positions. Planning and the non-sworn sector of the Police Department were up by 1%, and Public Services increased by 6%. Recreation rose by 2%, whereas Stormwater dropped by 7%. They had 10 agency temps at the end of the quarter to assist with staffing shortages. Traffic and Transportation experienced no change.

Chair Parker asked if they knew what led to the change in Public Service.

Ms. Quattlebaum said she did not know but could get that information.

Chair Parker asked if those were trash or CDL positions.

Ms. Pope said those could also be the ground custodian positions because they were having a hard time staffing those vacancies, along with streets and sidewalks.

Chair Parker asked if it was the way Stormwater managed some of the temporary positions.

Ms. Mazell said the Public Service, the ground custodian positions, were filled with temps. The departments were trying to fill those full-time vacancies, which had something to do with the increase, because they were showing as vacant while moving through the process to fill.

Recruitment Policy Review

Ms. Mazell said they posted positions externally and internally. The departments could ask for an internal posting only, which was a 5-day posting. The policy stated that they try to promote upward mobility within the City, and they reserved the right to give attention to internal fulfillment, or if

there were appropriate positions. They also reserved the right to post official and executive-level positions.

Ms. Pope said that when a vacancy occurred within the department, they communicated with them on their recruitment plan. If they wanted this to be an internal-only posting, and if they had qualified candidates, where they felt they could fill that internally to give their employees a promotional opportunity first. Also, if they could decide to post it both internally and externally. They would work with Ms. Mazell on creative recruitment, or any websites or organizations where they could go and find good candidates.

Ms. Mazell said that the summer seasonal hires were starting on Monday. The Aquatics department finished their hiring earlier because the pools were opening before the summer camps. They stayed engaged with a Workday consultant to fine-tune processes in Workday to make it more user-friendly for City staff. On May 22nd, managers will receive Workday training because they want to focus more on the managers, as they have greater responsibilities in the system. There will also be a Workday 101 session for non-manager positions. They are creating reference guides with pictures and text to help people with different processes in the system. Currently, they have 107 full-time and part-time hires, and 100 seasonal hires in progress.

Chair Parker asked if they were fully staffed for the season.

Ms. Mazell said they were close to being 90% full.

Ms. Pope said having a signing bonus for aquatics helped attract more people to apply.

Chair Parker said having a reference guide was a great tool to put together and that she would put a Workday update on the agenda for their next meeting.

Ms. Pope said they surveyed employees to gauge how they felt about Workday, which would help them figure out where their needs were from a training perspective.

Compensation Study Update

Mayor Cogswell said this was still ongoing and that they had a good call with CBIZ, who did the initial study. As previously discussed, additional data was needed, and updated job descriptions were in the process. They wanted to bring on the new HR director, who was scheduled to start on June 16th.

With there being no further business, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

Donna Constance

Clerk of Council