

Civil Service Commission Information

What is Civil Service Commission?

- The Commission is a citizen volunteer group of three (3) residents appointed by the mayor with advice and consent of the city council. The commissioners monitor the hiring process for police officers, police sergeants, administrative clerks, account disbursement clerks, maintenance worker, utilities operator, mechanic, building and grounds worker, and custodian.
- Civil Service Commissions' authority is focused on hiring, promotions, discipline, grievance processing, and compensation levels. This authority has been superseded by the Illinois collective bargaining law of 1986. Therefore, except for hiring all other employee interactions are governed through collective bargaining agreements not the civil service commission.

What are a few reasons why the City might want to change from the Civil Service Commission and process?

- The process to determine eligible candidates requires the posting/advertising for a position and creating a certified list in order to consider candidates for an open position can take a minimum of 90 days to complete. People interested and likely most qualified will not wait until the process is completed before finding another position. Potential employees apply for positions when they are available or are interested in a position, and they will typically take the first position that is offered. Waiting for up to two (2) years on a list to "maybe" be called for an opening is not effective in attracting the most qualified candidates.
- Crest Hill is the only non-home rule community that has a Civil Service Commission in the State. Crest Hill is one of only seven communities that utilize civil service for non-sworn positions out of over 1,294 total communities throughout the State.

What are few reasons why the City might want to maintain using the Civil Service Commission and process?

- The process includes structured exams, interviews, and evaluations, which provide a consistent and transparent framework for hiring. This reduces the risk of bias and ensures all candidates are treated fairly.
- The Civil Service Commission process is used to insulate hiring decisions from political influence.

What is the hiring process?

- The State law that empowers the Commission requires that the city have hiring lists for each of the positions listed. To create a list the city staff must undertake an advertising process, followed by a skills testing phase. If a candidate reaches at least a passing score of 70% on the written test they will be invited to an interview in which their answers are graded to determine a score. The score of the written test and the interview is averaged to create a total score. Candidates that have an

overall score of at least 70% are placed on a list for hiring consideration. The candidates are ranked based on their score from highest to lowest with the highest scoring candidate(s) being offered positions prior to lower scoring candidate(s). The hiring list expires after 2 years or when all candidates are hired or decline employment offers. When an opening occurs, the city reaches out to the next ranked candidate on the list to determine if the candidate is interested in working for the city. If so, the candidate must complete a background check and drug/alcohol screening. However, since the hiring list can be in place for up to two years, most candidates have moved onto other positions if they are not hired soon after the list is created.

- Since the process to be placed on a hiring list is a multi-step process there are numerous candidates that once they apply do not show up for the skills testing phase. The number of candidates that participate in the interview process is also diminished due to candidates finding other employment opportunities prior to completing the interview portion of the process. Therefore, regardless of the number that apply the final number that are placed on a list is typically reduced by at least 50% just by candidates not completing the multi-step process.

Could a different process make it easier to fill police officer positions?

- State law requires civil service process for sworn employees consisting of police officers and firefighters. Crest Hill only has police officers. The same lengthy process exists for hiring of sworn employees, but even though the hiring list process is lengthy all communities must utilize the same system. Therefore, one community does not have a hiring advantage over another as in the case of hiring civilian (non-sworn) employees.
- A Civil Service process that is focused on police officer hiring could create a list for lateral police officer appointments, i.e. certified officers interested in moving from another police agency to work in Crest Hill, could be placed on a list for hiring. Such a process is not currently available. Also, a Civil Service process that is focused on Police Officers would allow consolidated testing (testing with a group of other agencies) and specialized testing unique to police officers and not generic.

Could a different process make it easier to hire non-sworn (civilian) employees?

- Crest Hill is at a distinct disadvantage when competing against other communities when those communities can advertise and hire as an opening occurs. Candidates will invest the time and effort knowing there is a position open if they qualify. Unlike with a civil service process, which requires a multi-step process just to be placed on list for positions that might open up over the next two years.

How do nearby communities hire employees?

- When a position is open other communities advertise to gather interested candidates. Once interested and qualified candidates are evaluated, they are accessed through an interview process to determine the best qualified person.

Interested candidates are competing for an open position and not to be put on a hiring list to be considered at some time in the future. Hiring for an actively open position generates tangible interest at the time of the opening by larger numbers of interested candidates applying.

- Other communities are able to advertise for positions that require specific specialized skills that are not possible through a civil service process since applicants must be evaluated on their skill set through a testing process that could eliminate a majority of candidates. Applicants are evaluated through meeting the minimum job requirements not specific desired job duties unique to public works operations.

Why is a referendum necessary?

- The Civil Service Commission was created through a referendum in April 1965. Therefore, the only means to abolish the Commission is to obtain an affirmative vote of the residents. If such a referendum were to be approved the city council would create a Board of Police Commissioners to coordinate all police officer hires and sergeant promotions as required by State law as all other communities.

What might be the referendum question?

- In 2022 the City of Lincoln, IL posed the following question. This could be used as an example: **“The City of Lincoln believes that it would be better served not utilizing the rules created by the State of Illinois for its hiring practices. The City desires to abolish the Civil Service Commission thereby giving the City of Lincoln much more discretion on who they hire to work for its citizens. A vote 'yes' will abolish the Civil Service Commission while a vote 'no' will retain the Civil Service Commission.”**