

**MUNICIPAL FIRE AND POLICE CIVIL SERVICE
LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA
300 N. DUGAS RD
LAFAYETTE, LA 70507
(337) 291-8762**

A meeting of the Lafayette Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Board was held on April 9, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. in the Lafayette Consolidated Government Civil service testing room, 705 West University Avenue, Lafayette, Louisiana. Audio recording of this meeting will become part of the Board's permanent records.

Present at the meeting were Chairman Ron Clark, Vice Chairman L. Wayne Prejean, Lane T. Cortez, Charley Whipp III, Board Attorney Candice Hattan, Fire Chief Robert Benoit, Attorney Michael Corry, Tyler Cooley, Jordan Arnaud, Allyson Melancon, Chief Antoinette Gerald, Paula Broussard, Jason Boudreaux, Chester Bergeron, Sandra Bergeron, Alton Trahan, Chief Troy Gauthier, Human Resource Manager Rick Zeno, Police Chief Paul Trouard, Mia Terry, Board Secretary Mary Francis

Board member Dwight Prudhomme was not present for the meeting

Meeting called to order at 9:00 a.m. and opening statement read by Chairman Ron Clark.

- 1. Board authorization to approve minutes of January 29, 2025, February 27, 2025, March 28, 2025 and April 9, 2025 board meeting

This meeting item was deferred till next meeting.

- 2. Public Hearing: Jordan Arnaud vs Lafayette Consolidated Government (Fire Dept.) Appeal of Termination "Potential executive session. Parties notified on February 26, 2025"

Attorney Michael Corry informed the board that he was unprepared for the hearing due to not receiving the required 10-day notice. He cited Section 8 of the board rules, noting that he received notice only two days in advance.

Mr. Arnaud stated that he would be representing himself in the matter. Chairman Ron Clark informed Mr. Arnaud that several attempts had been made to reach him, but there had been no response since 2023 regarding this issue. Attorney Allyson Melancon concurred with Mr. Corry about her previous offer to represent Mr. Arnaud. However, she pointed out that there had also been a communication gap between her and Mr. Arnaud, which confirmed that she was not acting as his representative.

Chairman Clark acknowledged that Mr. Corry was entitled to his 10-day notice and recommended deferring the matter to a later meeting, emphasizing that it would not be postponed any further. He also provided Mr. Arnaud with information about the appeal process and advised him to update his contact information with Secretary Francis. After discussing possible dates to reschedule the hearing, it was agreed to hold it on June 11, 2025.

- 3. Board authorization to approve Donations of Annual Leave, if any

<u>NAME</u>	<u>HOURS</u>	<u>RECIPIENT</u>
Marion Borel, Jr.	24	Elizabeth Deans
Cpl. Michael Darbonne	24	Elizabeth Deans
Judith Estorge	8	Elizabeth Deans
Derek Francis	8	Elizabeth Deans
David C LeBlanc	8	Elizabeth Deans
Carlette S. Lawrence	8	Elizabeth Deans
Regina Lawrence	8	Elizabeth Deans
Johnnie Martinez	24	Elizabeth Deans
Norman Meldonado	8	Elizabeth Deans
Stacey Vernon	20	Elizabeth Deans
	140	

Motion to was made to approve donations of Annual leave by Charley Whipp III
Motion seconded by L. Wayne Prejean
Public comment: None
Opposition: None
Motion carried unanimously

4. Board authorization to approve posting notices for Fire Engineer, Deputy Fire Chief, and Fire Training Officer II

Motion to accept posting notices by Charley Whipp III

Motion seconded by L. Wayne Prejean

Public comment: None

Opposition: None

Motion carried unanimously

5. Board authorization to approve applications for Deputy Chief of Police, Police Departmental Records Clerk II, Hazmat Coordinator, Firefighter First Class, Fire Inspector II and Fire Investigator

Deputy Chief of Police

Qualified applicants:

Benoit, Matthew J.
Brabham, Dorian R.
Delahoussaye, Toby A.
Griffin Jr. Thomas W.
Mayfield, Jarvis S.
Oakes, Nicole B.
Prevost Jr., Ulysses J.
Sices, Thaddeus C.
Terro, Shawn P.
Thibeaux, Don W.
White, William L.

Police Departmental Records Clerk II

Qualified applicants:

Harter, Tiffany L.
Livings, Jessica L.
Ned, Samantha M.
Potier, Charlene M.
Taylor, Elizabeth A.
Warren, Margaret L.

Hazmat Coordinator

Qualified applicants:

Belote, Martin Q.
Gauthier, Troy D.
Girouard, Jason P.
Gravouia, Brennan M.
Johnson, Jason J.
Judice, Trevor J.
Prejean, Nicholas J.
Belote, Martine Q.

Firefighter First Class

Qualified applicants:

Adedayo, Stevenson O.
August, Michael J.
Bourque, Jake R.
Brantley, Drake M.
Dominque, Hayden N.
Gauthier, Stuart M.
Johnson, Joseph C.
Joseph Jr., Carl J.
Judice, Seth J.
Jumonville, Ross A.
Kilchrist, Luke M.
Lopez, Francisco
Maxwell, Grant A.
Morgan, Andray C.
Murray, Shane M.
Naquin, Jason J.
Pepiton, Jacob L.
Royer, Jaron J.
Royer, Tucker S.
Vincent, Jodi E.

Fire Inspector II

Qualified applicants:

Babineaux Jr., Howard
Fontenot, David A.
Green, Malcolm
Vallier, Rodney J.

Fire Investigator

Qualified applicants:

Chachere, Dustin R.
Cormier, Tyler A.
Devlin, Richard
Montgomery, Brandon M.
Roy, Nathan D.
Sonnier, Reynauldo K.

Motion to approve applications by L. Wayne Prejean

Motion seconded by Lane T. Cortez

Public comment: None

Opposition: None

Motion carried unanimously

6. Board authorization to accept appeal of suspension, Police Officer Jonathan Richard

Motion to accept appeal of suspension by L. Wayne Prejean

Motion seconded by Charley Whipp III

Public comment: None

Opposition: None

Motion carried unanimously

7. DISCUSSION: Request from Fire Communications Officer Paula Broussard regarding Fire Communications Officer II exam schedule

Chairman Clark informed everyone that the items on the agenda were discussion items and that no actions would be taken by the board at this time.

Paula Broussard raised a concern regarding her inability, along with a colleague, to be included on the eligibility list for the current Fire Communications Officer II promotion. She noted that the exam had not been administered within the required 18-month timeframe and requested that a resolution be presented to address this issue. Ms. Broussard also referenced a previous agenda item from 2024, which mentioned authorizing the posting of the FCOM II exam, but it was later retracted. She stressed that if the exam had been held as planned, they would have had the chance to take it and be included on the eligibility list.

Board Attorney Hattan sought clarification from Secretary Francis about the retraction of the posting. Ms. Francis recalled a past instance in which a posting had been removed due to a waiver but could not remember anything recent. Chairman Clark requested that a copy of the email regarding the retraction be provided to the board for clarification. Vice Chairman Prejean emphasized the importance of adhering to state law concerning the requirement for exam postings to be displayed on bulletin boards.

Attorney Hattan assured Ms. Broussard that she agreed with the statute requiring that the exam be given every 18 months and recommended further discussion to clarify the circumstances surrounding the retraction.

Chester Bergeron mentioned that he had contacted Board Member Whipp III about scheduling the test, but confirmed that it had not been posted. Mr. Whipp III stated that he does not call for exams for individual candidates; he only calls for an exam when the list is exhausted or according to the mandated 18-month schedule.

Attorney Hattan reiterated that the statute specifies the exam must be given within 18 months, not just posted. She confirmed with Secretary Francis that the next exam would be due in January 2025. She also noted that the meeting scheduled for December 2024 was canceled because Ms. Francis did not have the necessary equipment to prepare. Ms. Hattan explained that Ms. Francis made an inquiry with OSE and was informed that notices must be posted within 18 months. It was noted that Ms. Francis did post the notice, which aligned with the Examiners' response. Ms. Hattan highlighted that the board does not control when the exam is administered, only the approval of the applications. She expressed her efforts to find a remedy to the situation, but since she was unaware of the retraction mentioned earlier, further investigation would be required. Mr. Whipp III reiterated that the retracted exam was initially placed on the agenda, but he later learned from Chief Antionette Gerald that two active lists were already in existence.

Further discussion continued, with Ms. Hattan emphasizing her attempts to find a solution, although she noted that her search had been unsuccessful and required more time for research.

Chairman Clark concurred that additional research on the matter was necessary. He requested that anyone who finds the emails referencing the removal of the posting provide them to the board. He expressed his interest in understanding why the exam had been initially requested and who asked for its removal, highlighting the rarity of exhausting an applicant's list.

8. DISCUSSION: Request to be made whole from Fire Communications Officer Chester Bergeron regarding posting and exam schedules not following RS 33:2492

Chester Bergeron stated that the last exam date for the FCOII exam was July 26, 2023. He noted that an exam was supposed to be given 10 months ago, but the board and appointing authority had not posted the notice in over 21 months. He highlighted that the last notice was not displayed on the station's bulletin board, violating state statute 33:2492. Mr. Bergeron pointed out that Chief Benoit is also responsible for not ensuring the timely posting of exams and emphasized that the exam should have been administered by January 2025.

Mr. Bergeron noted that Chief Benoit promoted Mia Terry the day after the retirement of Loria Guidry, despite having 60 days to make that decision. He also mentioned that he contacted Board member Whipp III about the exam cancellation, which deprived him and Ms. Paula the chance of placement on the promotional list. He indicated that the board's failure to hold two timely meetings further disadvantaged both officers.

Chairman Clark stated for the record that the board is required to meet quarterly but holds meetings monthly. He noted that the only missed meeting was in December, while the others were rescheduled.

Ms. Hattan affirmed that the board meets more frequently than required by law, and all members strive to attend within their busy schedules, but acknowledged challenges in proceeding at times. Additional discussions were held with Ms. Hattan for clarity and to find a solution to remedy the situation, but no resolution was reached at that time.

Mr. Bergeron mentioned being told that the Communications Chief did not support his promotion. Vice Chairman Wayne suggested that everyone consult an attorney to review their case after passing the exam. Ms. Hattan clarified that her role is limited to representing and defending the board's actions, and she expressed that she does not see anything culpable involving any board members.

Sandra Bergeron emphasized that her husband, Chester Bergeron, has been a dedicated employee of the Lafayette Fire Department for 24 years. She expressed her frustration that someone's mistake has caused him stress regarding this promotion. She recounted a disrespectful meeting with Chief Benoit, in which he was told to accept the promotional decision and that the position would come up again later. She highlighted that her husband could not pass an exam that wasn't administered and noted that the position could have been held for 60 days. Ms. Hattan acknowledged that he could utilize his passing score to document his damages, while Mrs. Bergeron stressed that the matter proceeded as planned.

9. Public Hearing: Board investigation regarding complaint of Prohibited Political involvement against Police Major Michael Brown

Chairman Clark noted that matter was closed due to employee retiring.

Motion to dismiss investigation by Lane T. Cortez

Motion seconded by L. Wayne Prejean

Public comment: None

Opposition: None

Roll was called with Ron Clark, Lane Cortez, Charley Whipp III, and L. Wayne Prejean all voting yes

Motion carried unanimously

10. General Board business, if any –

Board Attorney Hattan inquired for more insight regarding the statute requiring posting notices be placed on bulletin boards; she wondered who puts them on the boards and who's done so in the past. Secretary Francis affirmed that she posts notices at City Hall and sends out emails of the notices to the OSE and respective departments to post according to the statute. Ms. Francis also noted that the OSE typically suggests that the department reps post at each station. Mr. Whipp III informed Chairman Clark of the 16 stations when he inquired about the number of fire stations. Chairman Clark agreed with Chief Gauthier's recommendation that all division heads post the notice on their departmental bulletin boards once they received the email from Ms. Yolanda. Further discussion was held highlighting the issues and benefits of sending notices via email and posting them on departmental bulletin boards.

Chairman Clark suggested that exams be scheduled for 15 months instead of 18 months.

11. Report of Counsel or legal updates, if any –

An updated was given by Ms. Hattan regarding the Glover matter, noting that the supreme court didn't respond. She also provided the Board with a case document involving the attorney general suit against St. Martinsville's Fire and Police Civil Service. She shared her appreciation of the board reviewing the case file covering all the alleged violations of open meeting laws and advised that each board member can be sued individually.

12. Public comment –

Chief Troy Gauthier suggested the qualifications for Fire Chief may need to be updated due to the outdated requirements.

Motion to adjourn by L. Wayne Prejean

Motion seconded by Lane Cortez

Public comment: None

Motion carried unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 10:21 am



Ron R. Clark
Chairman