

April 9, 2024

MEMORANDUM

To: Governance, Accountability & Economic Development Committee
From: Greg Doss, Analyst
Subject: TMP-10423 (D1d) – Seattle Police Department Recruitment and Retention

On April 11, 2024, the Governance, Accountability & Economic Development Committee will discuss a draft ordinance, TMP-10423, which would:

1. Create in the Seattle Police Department (SPD) a new Recruitment & Retention program that would be staffed by three positions that would be transferred from the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR);
2. Encourage the Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC) to use an entry level police officer exam that is presently used by multiple law enforcement agencies in the Puget Sound region, and to increase candidate contacts and the frequency of publication of its police officer eligibility registers; and
3. Add to SDHR a new Personnel Analyst Sr. position to support registry publications and to provide more robust candidate support.

This memo describes the changes that would be made by the draft ordinance and compares those changes with the budget adjustments and recruitment process revisions currently under consideration by the Executive and PSCSC. The bill Sponsors, Executive and PSCSC have indicated that they have shared goals to improve SPD's recruitment processes. Central staff could, if requested, draft amendments that might align the disparate approaches to this issue.

Background

In May 2022, the Council passed [Resolution 32050](#), calling for the establishment of a hiring incentive program to provide bonuses for entry level and lateral police officer hires to better compete against regional jurisdictions offering the same. In August 2022, the Council passed [Ordinance \(ORD\) 126654](#), which authorized funding for police officer hiring bonuses, allocated funding towards the recruitment and retention of SPD officers and created in SDHR three new police officer recruitment positions (a Manager 2 position and two Personnel Specialist positions) and one new position (Personnel Specialist) for the SDHR Fire and Police Exams Unit.

Council investments in police officer recruitment have not resulted in an increase in hiring. In the last two years, SPD yielded approximately half of its annual hiring targets, reaching a high of only 61 hires out of 1,948 applications in 2023, a conversion rate of three percent. A nationwide shortage of police applicants has likely contributed to the difficulty SPD has experienced hiring new recruits, and it's possible that SPD might have hired fewer recruits absent the City's investments.¹

¹ See [Recruitment Retention.pdf \(policeforum.org\)](#)

Applications submitted to the PSCSC have in the past five years declined from a high of 3,118 in 2019 to a low of 1,895 in 2022.² At the same time, applicant-to-hire conversion rates have hovered around three percent regardless of the number of applicants.

The bill sponsors indicated in the March 12, 2024, meeting of the Public Safety Committee that: (1) the SPD recruitment initiative would be more effective if it was organized under a professional manager that would implement best practices and could be held accountable for results; and (2) that changes must be made to PSCSC processes so that register publication would occur more frequently and candidates would receive prompt personal contact from the City.

In that meeting, the Mayor's Office and PSCSC indicated that they are currently working to improve recruiting by (1) physically relocating to SPD the two SDHR recruitment staff that were created in ORD 126654; and (2) increasing the speed and frequency of entry level police officer exams and the publication of candidate registers (i.e., a list of those who have taken and passed the exam). Committee members voiced concerns that the PSCSC's proposed changes were happening too slowly to remedy SPD's shrinking police force, and asked the PSCSC Executive Director to send to members a memo that provides information that is responsive to their concerns. Soon thereafter, the Public Safety Committee Chair sent to the PSCSC Executive Director a formal inquiry about the resources necessary to improve the PSCSC testing and candidate process. In response, the PSCSC Executive Director sent a memo on April 8, 2024, that indicated that the desired process efficiencies could be achieved through the addition of a new Personnel Analyst position (see Attachment 1).

TMP-10423

TMP-10423 would create a new SPD Recruitment & Retention program, and staff the program through the transfer from SDHR to SPD of the three recruitment positions that were created in SDHR via ORD 126654 (2.0 FTE Personnel Specialist, 1.0 FTE Manager 2). These positions would be solely dedicated to recruiting new sworn employees and retaining existing sworn employees for SPD. The bill would establish duties and reporting requirements for the positions. The bill would also add to the SDHR Fire and Police Exams unit a Personnel Analyst Sr. position to assist with more frequent publication of PSCSC registers and more robust candidate support during the testing phase. In summary, the outcomes of this re-organization would be a new dedicated recruitment team in SPD, and a strengthened testing unit in SDHR.

² 2020 is not included in these statistics because it was an extreme outlier for application numbers and applicant testing.

TMP-10423 also requests that the PSCSC to take the following actions:

1. When preparing or administering exams for entry level police officer candidates, the Commission should seek to use a public safety testing service that is also used by law enforcement agencies operating in King County, and geographically contiguous counties, and that provides greater access to candidates who wish to make multiple applications with such local law enforcement agencies; provided that any such exam is consistent with the goals of the Consent Decree or the City's Accountability Ordinance ([ORD 125315](#)).
2. Endeavor to personally contact entry level and lateral exam police officer applicants for the Seattle Police Department within two business days of application submittal to offer assistance and support for completing the exam. Commission staff also endeavor to personally contact, within two business days of their completion of the exam, candidates who have successfully completed the exam, to discuss next steps and answer questions. The goal of the personal contacts should be to improve the candidate experience and to facilitate contact with Seattle Police Department recruiters, so that Seattle Police Department recruitment personnel may contact candidates in a manner that is consistent, equitable and that conforms with employment law.
3. The Commission is encouraged to keep entry level police officer position registers current by endeavoring to provide an updated register every two weeks.

Fiscal Implications

The legislation would transfer from SDHR to SPD \$310,000 and the three recruitment positions that were created in SDHR via ORD 126654 (2.0 FTE Personnel Specialist, 1.0 FTE Manager 2). These positions would be solely dedicated to recruiting new sworn employees and retaining existing sworn employees for SPD

When created in ORD 126654 in August 2022, the full annual cost of the three positions was \$465,000. This Council Bill transfers from SDHR \$310,000 of this funding to support the three positions for eight months of salary and benefit costs in SPD. The \$155,000 of budget authority remaining in SDHR is sufficient to support: (1) year-to-date expenses for the single filled recruiter position in the unit (Jan-April) and (2) partial year funding (May-Dec) of a new Personnel Analyst Sr. position that the legislation creates for PSCSC.

Going forward, the net addition of one new position will add an on-going General Fund cost of approximately \$146,000, which would be funded through additional appropriations made to SDHR and SPD in the 2025 Annual Budget.

Reorganizations in TMP-10423 as compared with those being made by the Executive

The Executive is in the process of implementing via inter-departmental Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) a reorganization of the recruitment and retention positions that were created in ORD 126654. Some of the Executive's actions are similar to those that would be implemented through TMP-10423. Table 1 provides a comparison of TMP-10423 with Executive actions.

Table 1. Comparison of TMP-10423 with Executive actions.

SPD Recruitment Positions created in ORD 126654	TMP-10423	Under Consideration by Executive
<p>Manager 2 *Position currently vacant</p>	<p>Would require the Manager 2 to oversee all aspects of SPD’s Recruitment & Retention Program as originally intended by ORD 126654.</p> <p>Legally transfer from SDHR to SPD position and budget authority for eight months, with the transfer made permanent in the 2025 budget</p>	<p>Manager 2 position and budget is repurposed to manage the SDHR Fire & Police Exams unit, which is moved into the PSCSC via an MOU between SDHR and PSCS.</p> <p>The Executive would request position and budget to be legally transferred from SDHR to the PSCSC in a future request to the Council.</p> <p>The Executive would require the two SPD Recruiters to report to SPD’s HR Director.</p>
<p>SPD Recruiter / Personnel Spec</p>	<p>Legally transfers from SDHR to SPD position and budget authority for eight months with the transfer made permanent in the 2025 budget. Incumbent moves to SPD.</p>	<p>Position incumbent physically relocates from SDHR to SPD via an MOU.</p> <p>The Executive would request position and budget to be legally transferred to SPD in a future request to the Council.</p>
<p>SPD Recruiter/ Personnel Spec *Position currently vacant</p>	<p>Legally transfers from SDHR to SPD position and budget authority for eight months with the transfer made permanent in the 2025 budget</p>	<p>Physically locates any new hire from SDHR to SPD via an MOU</p> <p>The Executive would request position and budget to be legally transferred in a future request to the Council</p>
<p>New Position for Exams unit</p>		
<p>New Personnel Analyst Sr. Position</p>	<p>Creates a new Personnel Analyst Sr. position in SDHR Fire & Police Exams unit to support the PSCSC.</p> <p>Partial year funding (May-Dec) is available through existing vacancy savings in SDHR.</p> <p>Vacancy savings comes from vacancies in SPD Recruitment unit (see above).</p>	<p>Adds an Emergency Position (Personnel Analyst) to support the Fire & Police Exams unit, which is relocated to the PSCSC.</p> <p>The Executive would request a new permanent position and the associated budget authority in a future request to the Council.</p> <p>Budget authority likely derived from SDHR vacancies, but not presently understood.</p>

Transfer of the Public Safety Civil Service Exams Unit: SDHR and the PSCSC have entered into an MOU that would request in the 2025 Proposed Budget a transfer to the PSCSC of the four positions that are currently housed in the SDHR Fire & Police Exams Unit. They have also entered into an MOU that would permit the Manager 2 position created by ORD 126654 to be hired by and report to the PSCSC Executive Director to supervise the Fire & Police Exams Unit. Council approval would be required to make any of these transfers permanent. Additionally, Council approval is required to make permanent the Emergency Position that would be added to the PSCSC to supplement the Exams unit.

The Fire & Police Exams unit is currently managed by the SDHR Workforce Development manager, who splits his time between management of the Fire & Police Exams Unit and the three-person Workforce Development unit. This organizational structure is illustrated in the SDHR Org Chart in Attachment 3. Under the Executive's proposed reorganization, the Workforce Development Manager position would continue to manage the three-person Workforce Development unit, but would no longer manage the Fire & Police Exams unit.

The MOU that transfers the Exams unit says that the parties acknowledge that the Exams unit's work falls under the independent authority and direction of the PSCS and its Executive Director. It goes on to indicate that since 2001, pursuant to [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) 4.04.040.C](#), the Exams unit has been located within SDHR, to provide staff and support for the development and administration of entry and promotional merit-based exams in service to the PSCSC.

New Personnel Analyst Sr. Position: In an April 8 memo to Public Safety Committee members, the PSCSC Director indicates that an additional 0.5 FTE would allow the PSCSC to provide wrap-around support during the testing process and that an additional 0.5 FTE would allow the PSCSC to increase the frequency of the candidate register publications. Finally, the memo also notes that an additional 0.2 FTE would allow the PSCSC to administer ongoing surveys to applicants to better understand and improve the candidate experience (See Attachment 1 and Attachment 2).

The Executive has indicated that the City Finance Director will soon create in the PSCSC a 1.0 FTE temporary Emergency Position that would address the activities noted above. The Executive would eventually request that the Council provide permanent position authority and ongoing budget to support the position. The position is created in the PSCSC as an addition to the Fire & Police Exams unit that is moving into the PSCSC, pending Council approval.

TMP-10423 adds a permanent position for the same purpose, and thus there is general agreement about the need for additional staff at PSCSC, whether or not the testing unit is transferred here. The budget for the position is derived from salary savings in SDHR, which had accumulated from the vacancies in the SPD Recruitment unit.

Manager Position: As noted above, TMP-10423 and the Executive would make different uses of the Manager 2 position that was originally created in ORD 126654. TMP-10423 would retain the position for the management of SPD's Recruitment and Retention program, including:

- responsibility for developing and implementing recruitment strategies, in consultation with contracted marketing or media consultants,
- ensuring that a personal contact is made available to all police officer applicants for the public safety test, and
- accountability for continuous improvement and ensuring that recruitment strategies reflect best practices both nationwide and regionally.

The Executive has entered into an MOU that would repurpose this position and associated funding to manage the Fire & Police Exams unit, and would eventually request that the Council relocate all the positions and budget in this unit to the PSCSC.

The Executive has also indicated the PSCSC is requesting a Manager position and an Analyst (emergency position) to assist with speedier certification of the qualified register. Central staff have asked the Executive and PSCSC staff why both positions are needed to successfully complete the duties noted in a March 25th memo to Council President Nelson and the April 8th memo to Public Safety Committee members (see Attachments 1 and 2). A response has not been received at the time of this writing.

PSCSC Process Changes and Entry Level Police Officer Exam

Sponsors of TMP-10423 and The Executive have articulated an interest in changing the City's entry level police officer exam from one that is administered by NTN (National Testing Network) to one that is administered by PST (Public Safety Testing); or utilizing a testing process that employs both exams. Such a change might maximize the flexibility of applicants to apply with SPD and other regional law enforcement agencies that use only the PST exam. This issue was discussed in depth at the March 12, 2024, meeting of the Public Safety Committee. Additionally, the Primary Sponsor has articulated a need to address customer service concerns that SPD recruitment personnel have made about the NTN test, and which may result in some candidates not taking the exam.

In the April 8, 2024, memo to Public Safety Committee members, the PSCSC Executive Director indicates that she has not yet finalized her due diligence report on the feasibility of using PST, However, she reports a number of potential barriers to using the PST exam, including:

- A PST validation process would customize the test for Seattle candidates. An expedited process could be completed in eight weeks, or may take several months to complete.³

³ The PSCSC memo in Attachment 1 indicates that the process would take "several months" to complete. This information conflicts with recent communications that were made with PST President John Walters, who said that the process could be expedited and completed in less than eight weeks. Central staff has not had time to investigate the differences between these estimates.

- The PSCSC's due diligence process involves completion of a 44-question survey, which it indicates is designed to ensure that hiring standards are not compromised, and that police candidates have the competencies to carry out their duties in a manner that supports constitutional policing. PST has declined to participate in the due diligence process.

A recent communication with the PST Company President indicates that he believes that some of the questions require information that is proprietary and confidential and would be subject to public disclosure. He further indicates that his company will not complete the PSCSC due diligence process because it poses much risk to PST. The PSCSC Executive Director indicates that the survey does not request information that the PSCSC considered to be proprietary. More staff research on this issue is ongoing.

The PSCSC Executive Director has concluded that it is not possible to produce merit-based eligibility lists when using two different tests. She has indicated that her conclusion is based on her professional experience and input that she has received from experts in the field of personnel selection testing. More information is available in the April 8 memo. (Attachment 1)

Central Staff is conducting further research on the potential use of a new exam vendor and the other changes that would affect PSCSC processes (See Section 8 in TMP-10423 or page 2 in this memo). TMP-10423 does not currently mandate these changes, but rather uses discretionary language to request that the PSCSC consider the changes.

Race and Social Justice Implications

The Seattle Police Department has realized a net loss of 337 fully trained police officers since 2020. Consequently, 911 response times have increased, and many of Seattle's elected officials have indicated that police hiring is a priority for the City.

This legislation has the potential to increase the speed and efficacy of SPD and the PSCSC's police officer recruitment, retention and testing processes. To the extent that the legislation can create changes that improve these processes, the City may realize more sworn officer hires than it would have absent the adoption of the legislation.

In the last five years, SPD has put greater effort into recruiting people of color and has seen an increase in BIPOC hires from 37 percent to a high of 55 percent. If SPD continues to be successful in its efforts to recruit people of color, it will have an effect of diversifying the sworn force. This legislation has a potential to assist with the department's goals in this area.

Additional sworn officer hires would increase the size of the Seattle Police Department sworn force and, depending on how any additional officers are used and deployed, could increase the incidence of arrests and for individuals' entry into a criminal legal system that has historically had disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and historically disadvantaged communities.

Elected leaders and police command staff should consider the potential for reducing these harms as SPD replenishes its officer numbers to prior levels.

Policy Considerations

It is possible that technical amendments made to TMP-10423 would achieve the policy objectives shared by the Executive and bill sponsors, while supporting the Executive's reorganization of the Fire & Police Exams unit. Such amendments would presume that the Council would concur with the Executive's proposed reorganization, which the Committee has not had time to fully consider and is not strictly necessary to achieve the sponsor's policy goals for TMP-10423.

Attachments:

1. April 8, 2024, PSCSC Memo - Civil Service Exam Processes for Police Officers
2. March 25, 2024, PSCSC Memo - Increasing PSCSC staff capacity to support continuous police officer certification and more robust candidate support
3. SDHR 2024 Organizational Chart (Talent Acquisition Section)

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Aly Pennucci, Deputy Director