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Candice Livingston / Ben Noble
CSC Amendment of Section 4.08.070 of SMC ORD
April 5~~February 26~~, 2013
Version #~~2~~3

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL 117742

AN ORDINANCE related to the amendment of Section 4.08.070 of the Seattle Municipal Code to remove the $25 fee charged by the Public Safety Civil Service Commission for police and fire entry-level exams.

WHEREAS, as part of the Seattle Police Department's 20/20 plan the Department is committed to recruiting great officers; and

WHEREAS, within the next 5 years, over 300 officers will likely retire from the Seattle Police Department; and

WEREAS, there is an opportunity to attract and hire local police officers who reflect Seattle's values and increasing diversity and represent all of its communities; and

WHEREAS, the Public Safety Civil Service Commission collects a nonrefundable application fee of $25 for entry-level firefighter and police officer applicants;

WHEREAS, the $25 fee was adopted in an effort to reduce the amount of no-show applicants at testing facilities; and

WHEREAS, these fees have minimally reduced the amount of no-show applicants to police and fire exams and a large number of no-shows continue to occur; and

WHEREAS, these fees have reduced the number of possible viable applicants who sit for the exam as up to one-third of the approved applicants may drop out at this juncture in the process; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Police Department and Personnel Department agree that this fee could be a potential barrier for entry for viable police candidates; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Section 4.08.070, last amended by Ordinance 123744, is amended as follows:

The Commission shall:

* * *

C. With the support of the Personnel Director pursuant to Section 4.04.040, prepare and administer examinations, which shall be graded and open to all who meet appropriate job-related qualifications; provided that the Commission may, by rule, designate other methods of examination based on merit when in the Commission's judgment graded examination is not practicable. Such examinations may include tests of physical fitness and/or manual skill. The Commission may designate a suitable number of persons to be examiners to conduct such examinations. A Commissioner may act as examiner. ((~~The Commission shall charge a nonrefundable application fee of $25 for entry-level firefighter and police officer applicants. The Commission shall waive this fee for indigent applicants upon submission by the applicant of a declaration of indigency.~~))

* * *

Section 2. Three years after implementation of this legislation, the Personnel Department, after consulting with the Public Safety Civil Service Commission and the Police and Fire Departments, shall report to the Council with an evaluation of this new policy's effectiveness. The evaluation will assess whether eliminating the application fee has accomplished the goals of increasing the number of viable candidates and in particular the number of minority and female applicants and recruits.

Section ~~2~~3. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the ____ day of _____, 2013, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this

_____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

President _____of the City Council

Approved by me this ____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

Michael McGinn, Mayor

Filed by me this ____ day of _____, 2013.

_____

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)

Form revised: December 12, 2012

FISCAL NOTE FOR NON-CAPITAL PROJECTS

Department:	Contact Person/Phone:	CBO Analyst/Phone:
Civil Service Commissioners (CSC)	Jennifer Greenlee/3-7118	Candice Livingston/3-7274

Legislation Title: AN ORDINANCE related to the amendment of Section 4.08.070 of the Seattle Municipal Code to remove the $25 fee charged by the Public Safety Civil Service Commission for police and fire entry-level exams.

Summary of the Legislation:
This legislation will amend the Seattle Municipal Code pertaining to the Public Safety Civil Service Commission and remove the $25 application fee for entry-level police and fire exams.

Background:
The Public Safety Civil Service Commission (Commission) is required by Seattle Municipal Code to charge a $25 fee for entry-level firefighter and police officer applicants. This fee is an attempt to discourage applicants from signing up for written tests and then failing to appear on the test date. This fee is paid after Personnel Department staff has reviewed a candidate's application for completeness and minimum requirements. Should applicants be unable to pay the fee due to indigence, they may file a waiver online which is reviewed and approved by the department for which the test is being administered.

The timing of this fee has little effect on the administrative workload of the Personnel Department as they still must review every received application. The fee should however reduce administrative cost of administering a written test by reducing the incidence of no-shows at the written test location. Unfortunately, the number of no-show applicants has occurred in large numbers despite the $25 fee. In November 2012, of the 849 police applicants who paid the fee or requested a waiver, only 482 applicants actually sat for the administration of the test. Nearly half of the applicants who paid the fee did not attend the exam. Little to no savings in written test administration costs could be recovered at that point as preparations were made for the larger population.

The unintended consequence of this fee has been that candidates approved to sit for the test by Personnel Department have failed to take the next step and pay the fee making them ineligible to take the written exam. In November 2012, 312 candidates who were eligible to take the test did not pay the fee or request a waiver. This represented 27% of the total candidates who were eligible for the exam.

It is unknown at this time why candidates do not return to pay the fee, but there are a number of possible reasons. First, the payment process may be too complicated resulting in candidates failing to return to the payment process on the internet or the inability to completely navigate

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through the payment system. Second, the $25 fee may pose a monetary barrier for an applicant. While there is a waiver process, candidates may feel that applying for a waiver may hurt their chances of becoming an officer. In addition, filing a waiver could be a considered a shameful process resulting in candidates who cannot afford the fee just choosing not to complete the process. Finally, candidates may not pay the fee because their job circumstances have changed as well.

No matter what the reason, when one-third of the candidates are choosing not to complete the process, it is possible that the fee is creating a barrier to entry for candidates. Seattle Police Department and the Personnel Department have expressed a desire to discontinue the use of this fee.

At this time, the Seattle Municipal Code requires the Commission to charge this $25 fee, allowing only a waiver for indigence by an applicant. This legislation would amend the Seattle Municipal Code to remove the fee for all candidates and eliminate the need for waivers.

Removal of this fee in 2013 could result in the loss of approximately $33,000 in revenue for the General Fund if the fee is waiver for both remaining entry-level police exams this year. The Seattle Fire Department is not planning on administering any large entry-level tests during 2013. In future years, this legislation will result in the reduction of general fund revenues by $50,000 per year.

The Personnel Department is unable to determine what if any the administrative savings of removing this fee will be at this time. The fee itself is administered automatically through an online program which results in minimal staff time savings as staff still need to review all applications and schedule individuals for the test. A minimum of administrative time may be saved in affected Departments due to the removal of the waiver program but at this time that has not been calculated.

Please check one of the following:

____ **This legislation does not have any financial implications.**

__X__ **This legislation has financial implications.**

Appropriations:

Fund Name and Number	Department	Budget Control Level*	2013 Appropriation	2014 Anticipated Appropriation
TOTAL				

**See budget book to obtain the appropriate Budget Control Level for your department.*

Appropriations Notes:
None

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Anticipated Revenue/Reimbursement Resulting from this Legislation:

Fund Name and Number	Department	Revenue Source	2013 Revenue	2014 Revenue
General Fund 00100	Personnel Department		($34,000)	($50,000)
TOTAL			**($34,000)**	**$50,000**

Revenue/Reimbursement Notes:
This revenue reduction is based on estimated revenue of $17,000 per test. There are two tests remaining in the 2013 fiscal year for entry-level police officers.

Total Regular Positions Created, Modified, or Abrogated through this Legislation, Including FTE Impact:

Position Title and Department	Position # for Existing Positions	Fund Name & #	PT/FT	2013 Positions	2013 FTE	2014 Positions*	2014 FTE*
TOTAL							

** 2014 positions and FTE are total 2014 position changes resulting from this legislation, not incremental changes. Therefore, under 2014, please be sure to include any continuing positions from 2013.*

Position Notes:
None

Do positions sunset in the future?
(If yes, identify sunset date)

Spending/Cash Flow:

Fund Name & #	Department	Budget Control Level*	2013 Expenditures	2014 Anticipated Expenditures
TOTAL				

** See budget book to obtain the appropriate Budget Control Level for your department.*

Spending/Cash Flow Notes:
None

Other Implications:

a) **Does the legislation have indirect financial implications, or long-term implications?**

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Removal of this fee will result in the loss of $25 per applicant per test. At this time, it is estimated that the net effect in 2013 would be a reduction of $17,000 in general fund revenue per test administered for up to two tests this year. This reduction would be approximately $50,000 per year in subsequent years.

b) **What is the financial cost of not implementing the legislation?**
Not implementing this legislation would not result in a direct financial cost. However, ultimately the number of candidates who are tested will be less as a result of the fee.

c) **Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department?**
This legislation indirectly affects the Seattle Police Department, Seattle Fire Department, and Personnel Department.

d) **What are the possible alternatives to the legislation that could achieve the same or similar objectives?**
The possible alternative to allow waivers for applicants is currently in place. We cannot completely remove the fee without changing the Seattle Municipal Code.

e) **Is a public hearing required for this legislation?**
No.

f) **Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required for this legislation?**
No.

g) **Does this legislation affect a piece of property?**
No.

h) **Other Issues:**

List attachments to the fiscal note below:

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City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

March 5, 2013

Honorable Sally J. Clark
President
Seattle City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor

Dear Council President Clark:

I am pleased to transmit the attached proposed Council Bill to remove the $25 fee for entry-level police and fire exams by amending Section 4.08.070 of the Seattle Municipal Code. This fee was originally intended to ensure attendance at written police and fire entry-level exams, thereby reducing administrative costs of administering the exam. I recently commissioned a report on police recruiting and the report brought to my attention that the fee is doing little to reduce the occurrence of no-shows on the actual test date and may actually be creating a barrier to entry for qualified candidates.

In fall 2012, 1,100 applicants qualified to take the entry-level police hiring test. Of those, 312 applicants did not complete the fee payment process in order to take the test. Among other things, these figures tell me that a significant number of the total candidates who qualified for the police exam may have been eliminated because of the barrier to entry the fee may have created.

The Personnel Department, the Seattle Police Department, and the Seattle Fire Department have requested to discontinue the entry-level fee because it has not been successful in ensuring attendance at the exam and may be a barrier to entry for some candidates who would otherwise complete the testing process.

Nearly 300 officers are projected to retire within the next 5 years requiring an intensive hiring strategy moving forward. As part of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) 20/20 plan, SPD is committed to recruiting great officers who reflect Seattle's values and increasing diversity and represent all of its communities. The Department feels that removing this fee will help accomplish hiring goals.

I appreciate your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Candice Livingston at 3-7274.

Sincerely,

Michael McGinn
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council

Michael McGinn, Mayor
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