

Current Language:

Section 6.14(C)(2) - For open, free and competitive examinations to test the relative fitness of applicants for such positions, and for reasonable publication and public advertisement of all examinations.

Proposed Language:

Section 6.14(C)(2) - For open, ~~free~~ and competitive examinations to test the relative fitness of applicants for such positions, and for reasonable publication and public advertisement for all examinations.

Rationale:

The Police Department has requested this change to the City Charter language to allow the City the opportunity to explore whether a nominal application or testing fee would be beneficial to the department to cover some of the significant testing costs, and to provide a means to limit incurring these application processing and testing costs to only those applicants who are willing to invest such a nominal fee for the opportunity to compete for positions.

The current interpretation of the word “free” is “free of charge.” This means that although there are significant costs to certain departments to process high numbers of applications and test applicants for positions for which they are applying, there is no ability to recoup these even a portion of these costs from the applicants.

Police Officer (recruit and lateral) recruitment and selection processes typically have hundreds or even thousands of applicants for only a few openings. With the ease of the NEOGOV application system, and the economic downturn, applications for these positions have increased, and an increased number of people appear to be filling out an application only to keep receiving an unemployment check. The Police Department requires an initial personal history questionnaire to be completed by the applicant and reviewed prior to any testing appointment, which takes a significant amount of processing time and effort. Charging a nominal fee would hopefully eliminate or significantly reduce those applicants

who apply to satisfy requirements for receiving unemployment compensation with no real interest in the job or intent to follow through with the testing process.

Applicants are required to pay a fee, sometimes up to \$50, to apply to many police and fire departments in Washington, either directly or through a testing company. These police departments where application fees apply (see attached), have not experienced concerns from serious applicants for positions. Many departments where a fee is charged also provide waivers for those who can demonstrate that the fee is a financial hardship. The Tacoma Police Department is proposing a very nominal \$10 application fee.

Any fee may be subject to review/approval by the City Council as part of the process to adopt the City's fee schedule. Eliminating the word "free" in the City Charter doesn't mean that the City would be required to charge for applications, only that the opportunity would be available, and likely would be limited to only those departments with extensive and expensive testing processes for entry-level positions with a high volume of applications, such as police and fire. Fees could be reviewed and adjusted as needed during the fee schedule process.