



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
OF THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Fredy Roldan, Fire Captain
(PM1111S), Elizabeth

CSC Docket No. 2016-2573

Examination Appeal

ISSUED: **OCT 25 2016** (RE)

Fredy Roldan appeals his score for the oral portion of the promotional examination for Fire Captain (PM1111S), Elizabeth. It is noted that the appellant passed the subject examination with a final score of 88.240 and his name appears as the 28th ranked eligible on the subject list.

It is noted for the record that this two-part examination consisted of a written multiple-choice portion and an oral portion. Candidates were required to pass the written portion of the examination, and then were ranked on their performance on both portions of the examination. The test was worth 80 percent of the final score and seniority was worth the remaining 20 percent. Of the test weights, 31.35% of the score was the written multiple-choice portion, 22.49% was the technical score for the evolving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the evolving exercise, 4.28% was the oral communication score for the evolving exercise, 19.23% was the technical score for the arriving exercise, 7.53% was the supervision score for the arriving exercise, and 7.59% was the oral communication score for the arriving exercise.

The oral portion of the Fire Captain examination consisted of two scenarios: a fire scene simulation with questions designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of fire fighters and the ability to assess fire conditions and hazards in an evolving incident on the fireground (evolving); and a fire scene simulation designed to measure the knowledge of safe rescue tactics and procedures to safeguard citizens, supervision of firefighters and the ability to plan strategies and tactics based upon a building's

structure and condition (arriving). Knowledge of supervision was measured by questions in both scenarios, and was scored for each. For the evolving scenario, candidates were provided with a 15-minute preparation period, and candidates had 10 minutes to respond. For the arriving scenario, a five minute preparation period was given and candidates had 10 minutes to respond.

The candidates' responses were scored on technical knowledge and oral communication ability. Prior to the administration of the exam, a panel of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) determined the scoring criteria, using generally approved fire command practices, firefighting practices, and reference materials. Scoring decisions were based on SME-approved possible courses of action (PCAs) including those actions that must be taken to resolve the situation as presented. For a performance to be acceptable, a candidate needed to present the mandatory courses of action for that scenario. Only those oral responses that depicted relevant behaviors that were observable and could be quantified were assessed in the scoring process. Each performance was evaluated by two SMEs who currently are a first level supervisor or higher. If the SME scores differed by 1 point, the score was averaged. If they differed by more than 1 point, the SMEs were required to confer with each other until they agreed on a score. Scores were then converted to standardized scores.

Candidates were rated on a five-point scale, with 5 as the optimal response, 4 as a more than acceptable passing response, 3 as a minimally acceptable passing response, 2 as a less than acceptable response, and 1 as a much less than acceptable response. For each of the scenes, and for oral communication, the requirements for each score were defined. For the evolving scenario, the appellant scored a 5 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 3 for the oral communication component. For the arriving scenario, the appellant scored a 5 for the technical component, a 5 for the supervision component, and a 3 for the oral communication component.

The appellant challenges his scores for the oral communication components of both scenarios. As a result, the appellant's test material, video, and a listing of PCAs for the scenarios were reviewed.

For the oral communication components of both scenarios, the assessors indicated that the appellant displayed a major weakness in rate of speech by speaking so rapidly that at times he was very difficult to understand. They also indicated that the presentation showed a minor weakness in organization by giving some actions out of order. On appeal, the appellant contends that because he scored 5s on the technical and supervision components, his oral communication score was inconsistent. He states that he was clear and detailed in his responses, and there was no lack of understanding or issues with the rate of response. He states that the

assessor notes regarding his rate of speech is a generalized statement since no specific time frames were given regarding misunderstood or unclear statements. He argues that in his 20 years of experience he has never had an incident during a fire ground operation, situation, or public speaking event, where his communication has been misunderstood.

In regard to the difference in scoring of both components for these scenarios, the components measured in the oral examination are viewed as independent and are scored accordingly. Behaviors can be attributed to each component which are sufficiently distinguishable to warrant a unique score. Thus, candidates can completely answer the questions for the technical component, while exhibiting negative behaviors or weaknesses in the oral communication component. Or, candidates can fail to properly answer the questions for the technical component, while exhibiting no weaknesses in the oral communication component. As such, an independent score can be assigned for the technical and oral communication components within a performance. Thus, a candidate's behavior on one component cannot be used to score his behavior on another component, and is not reflective of a score for another component.

A review of the video and related examination materials reveals that the appellant's presentations had the weaknesses listed by the assessor. The orientation guide that was available to each candidate indicated that oral communication, the ability to communicate clearly and concisely, was a component of this portion of the exam. A factor in oral communication is inflection/moderation/rate/volume. This factor is defined as speaking at an appropriate rate, maintaining appropriate pitch and volume, and properly using pitch to convey meaning or emphasis. Another factor is organization, defined as presenting ideas in a logical fashion, stating a topic, and providing supporting arguments as well as a conclusion or summary.

As to his rate of speech, the appellant spoke more rapidly than normally, and it was clear that he did so, as his speech and demeanor was normal when he was conversing with his monitor. There were no normal pauses between sentences or ideas, similar to a sales pitch. The appellant maintained a rapid pace throughout his ten minute response periods, which resulted in errors of communication such as skipped or missing words. For example, in the evolving scenario, he stated, "Com...comash...com... for communications, members was right to fireground fre...frequency for good fireg...ah, good fireground communications." For the supervision component, the appellant started most of the sentences with "I am going to..." and gave these sentences in rapid succession.

For organization, in the evolving scenario, the appellant gave multiple responses and then said that this concluded his response to question 1. Question 2 included

the evolution of the scene, where fire reached wood roof trusses causing one to fail. After calling for another alarm and evacuating his crew, the appellant took actions such as requesting EMS, calling for the office of emergency management, assigning a safety officer, and other actions that were appropriate to take upon arrival. He then continued without hesitation to directly answer question 2 such as calling for a personal accountability report (PAR). He then said that he would stretch hose lines to protect victims and as backup lines.

The appellant's presentation for the arriving scenario is similar. Again, he spoke in a rush to provide information. Slight pauses that are heard in normal speech, such as after the end of a sentence were not there, making the presentation seem to be a quick stream of words. The cadence of normal speech was absent, such as the fall in inflection of the voice at the end of a sentence, and the articulation rate was fast and difficult to follow. As to organization, the appellant fought the fire, and spoke about protecting exposures. After decentralizing, reducing his span of control, and reviewing his tactics, he prepared for defensive operations. Then he stated that he would coordinate his attack, make sure members searched off the hoseline, have members work in teams of two, and tag in and tag out, and took other preliminary actions. This was information that should have been delivered earlier, but was added in after the appellant stretched hoselines into the fire building, decentralized and prepared for defensive mode. The appellant was correctly scored for the oral communication component for both scenarios.

CONCLUSION

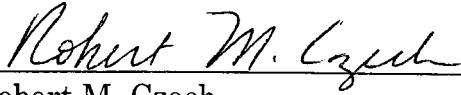
A thorough review of the appellant's submissions and the test materials indicates that the decision below is amply supported by the record, and the appellant has failed to meet his burden of proof in this matter.

ORDER

Therefore, it is ordered that this appeal be denied.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in a judicial forum.

DECISION RENDERED BY THE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
THE 19th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016



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