

AAQOLAC Human Resources Workgroup Meeting with AFD March 4, 2020
1:00-2:30 PM

Participants AAQOLAC: Commissioner Sarah Chen, Commission Chair Vince Cobalis, Commissioner Kirk Yoshida; Austin Fire Department: Chief Joel Baker, Assistant Chief Pablo Ruiz, Lieutenant Nunez (Recruitment)

Topic:

AFD Recruitment of Asian Americans

Agenda:

- Chief Baker's Atlanta experience regarding minority recruitment
- Demographics of AFD's past recruitment efforts
- AFD data sets for community recruitment efforts
- AFD data sets for high school recruitment efforts
- Comparison of AFD with other cities, ICMA/NFPA; LBJ High School efforts
- Asian American [Firefighter] Associations

Discussions:

- Applicant population in Atlanta, GA was largely African American; whereas Austin has experienced a great number of applicants from California. Union accused HQ of hiring only Blacks.
- San Francisco has an Asian American Firefighters Association.
- Challenge is how to recruit Asian Americans. AFD proposed AA Firefighter posters and recruitment posters that include Asian Americans in a group photo. Workgroup members and AFD personnel discussed advertisement efforts. Low-cost suggestions, to be done within existing budget, included making videos featuring AA Firefighters and play them in loops at the AARC, displaying AA Firefighter posters at the AARC (upon discussion and approval by AARC Facilities Manager). Chair Cobalis will discuss with Sona Shah.
- Recruitment process is a lengthy two-year cycle, starting with potential applicants signing a CIC (Candidate Interest Card) either online (JoinAFD.com) or at job fairs or community events with on-site recruiters, which could be done as early as two years before the formal testing held every two years. AFD has a mentorship program (Pass the Torch) for CIC applicants, meeting 1-2 times a week for 6 months, with mock interviews and mini-academy tryouts. This program has been most productive in hiring.
- Selection criteria is written test score constituting 20% and interview 80% of total score for selection of top 300 to hire in 3-5 years. Interview panel members are high school teachers selected by the vendor that administers the testing process, to interview and score candidates who passed the written test. Panel assessments are in the summer. Vendor gives training to teachers – community review. There have been no Asian Americans on the panels. The interview is a structured oral process, scenario based and video recorded. Based on AFD data sets, commissioners and AFD personnel discussed possible reasons Asian Americans did not score well in interviews.

- The 2021 application test is in mid-June, and AFD will take applications in March-May, 2021.
- One possible budget neutral solution is to have AA Firefighters show up in community events in uniform to draw interest, but not necessarily work in recruitment. Due to scheduling and back-fill pay issue, if an AA Firefighter is taken out of regular duty to work recruitment, there will be budget impact. Lieutenant Nunez will review advertisement budget for video and poster productions.
- Chief Baker will schedule a meeting between AAQOLAC and AFD AA Firefighters.

Data:

- CIC (Candidate Interest Card) demographics for HP (Hiring Process)19 and HP21 showed almost no increase in APA (Asian Pacific Americans) percentage-wise. Out of the HP19 total CIC of 5333, 179 (3%) were APA. In HP21 to date, of the 1522 CIC, 51 (4%) was APA.
- Pass the Torch (mentorship program) demographics 2014-2019, of the total 194 participants, 12 were Asian Americans, roughly 6%.
- Applicant demographics 2017 vs. 2019: Out of the 2017 total 1735 applicants, 28 (1.6%) were Asian Pacific Americans. In 2019, 83 (2.4%) of the 3430 applicants identified themselves as Asian Pacific American.
- Academy demographics 2017 vs. 2019: In 2017, 3 (1.5%) of the 195 were APA. In 2019, 6 (7.1%) of the 84 were APA.
- 2017 Academy graduate demographics indicated 5 (3%) APA out of a class of 166.