

Though our primary role is as educators, we are also one of the major employers in our community. In that role, we receive many calls about employment, and even more when the economy is struggling.

Because we are a “city school district,” most of the non-teaching jobs we have are civil service positions. I’d like to offer a brief overview of what that means because it’s a system many people are not familiar with. The key point is that applicants need to take a civil service test for a specific position, and then we hire from among the highest-scoring applicants.

The three-member Fairfield Civil Service Commission oversees the tests and the maintenance of the applicant lists. Many of the city’s jobs are civil service positions, and the commission is also responsible for positions in the Fairfield City Schools.

Announcements of civil service examinations are made in the news media, on the bulletin board at the Fairfield Municipal Building, at the Fairfield Lane Public Library and on the job opportunities page on city’s web site.

The jobs in our school district that are civil service positions are secretaries, clerks, data entry staff, custodians and head custodians, cooks and head cooks, bookkeepers, receptionists, and some of our maintenance department positions, such as electricians and HVAC technicians. There are a few specific positions in those categories that are exempt from civil service requirements, but the majority of the jobs are part of the civil service system.

If someone is interested in one of these positions, the first step is to take the test for that specific job. The tests, however, are given only every two years. So realistically, a civil service position is not likely a rapid path to employment unless that particular test happens to be coming up very soon.

Once the test is taken, all those who score above a certain level are put onto a list of eligible applicants, in order by their test score. We work from that list in groups of 10. So when we have an opening, we turn to the list for that type of job, review the top 10 names on it, and select candidates to be interviewed.

Of course, during the two years between tests, the list changes. Some people on it obtain employment with us, or accept other jobs with other employers, or move out of the area, or just decide they’re not interested in a civil service position anymore. Also, an applicant who declines three interview opportunities is removed from the list. So names tend to move up on the list over time. Right now, for instance, if we were seeking to hire a custodian, we would be choosing from applicants who were originally around No. 30 on the list when it was first compiled after the test.

The philosophy behind the civil service concept is to ensure the selection of applicants for these positions is merit-based, i.e., the highest-scoring individuals are offered interviews before others.

Readers who would like more information about the civil service positions within the school district can call the Civil Service Commission office at 867-5381. There is also a complete explanation of the program and the procedures on the city's web site, at www.fairfield-city.org/hr/civilservice.cfm.

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