



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Regulatory Services

Date October 20, 2004
To Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee

Subject Amending Title 13, Chapter 278 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to *Licenses and Business Regulations: Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning, Gasfitting, Oil, Plumber/Gas Fitter, Refrigeration and Steam and Hot Water Installer* to have the contracted vendor perform application screening instead of the Human Resources Department, and to clarify the appeals process and minimum qualifications for comp card candidates.

Recommendation

The Department of Regulatory Services recommends that the City Council adopt the proposed amendments to Chapter 278, to provide for contracted vendor application screening based on the specified minimum qualifications to take an exam and clarify the appeals process. All amendments shall be effective January 1, 2005.

Previous Directives

Public hearing on the ordinance amendments is set for Wednesday, October 27, 2004.

Prepared or Submitted by: Connie Fournier, Deputy Director, Construction Inspection Services
Steve Heng, Assistant City Attorney

Approved by:

Merwyn Larson, Director, Inspections

Rocco Forte', Assistant City Coordinator & Director of
Emergency Preparedness

John Moir, City Coordinator

Presenter in Committee: Connie Fournier, Deputy Director, Construction Inspection Services

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

No financial impact - or - Action is within current department budget.
Action is a part of the Human Resources Business Plan Key Initiative #4

Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget

Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget

Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase

Action requires use of contingency or reserves

Other financial impact (Explain): ___ Request provided to the Budget Office when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Community Impact (use any categories that apply)

Neighborhood Notification

City Goals

Comprehensive Plan

Zoning Code

Other

Background

On October 1, 1998, the City of Minneapolis Human Resources (HR) Department entered into a contract with National Assessments Institute, Inc. (now Experior Assessments, LLC, a subsidiary of Thomson Prometric) to provide comp card testing services in accordance with Chapter 278 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances (MCO). Since that time, the Human Resources Department has been the responsible party for screening trade competency card applications based on the ordinance and the contract.

The HR Department's 2004 Business Plan identifies four key initiatives including the need to provide strategic HR services to operating departments with limited and diminishing resources. In order to focus on their mission, the delivery of core services, and have the resources to accomplish the initiatives within the business plan, it was determined that HR needed to identify services that were not aligned with its mission and core services. Discontinuing involvement in the competency card process was one service of several existing services identified. Moreover, the workforce of the HR department has been reduced by 11 percent from 2002 to 2005, with more significant staff reductions projected under the City's Five Year Financial Direction.

The contracted vendor, Experior Assessments, LLC, provides eligibility screening as a standard part of their services. They have dedicated staff familiar with the requirements associated with application review and eligibility screening. They currently provide these services to numerous other clients across the country. They also have six years of experience with the City of Minneapolis relative to the competency card program and have delivered these services very professionally.

Ordinance Amendments (attached)

Therefore, in order to facilitate the implementation of the HR Department's Business Plan, we are recommending the attached ordinance revisions which substitute the contracted vendor wherever the HR Department was referenced in regards to the application screening process. (See MCO Sections 278.410, 278.420, 278.440, 278.470 and 278.510.)

A new professional services agreement is being signed to complete the transfer of these services to the vendor. In that agreement there will be a minor filing fee of \$20 to screen and process the applications. MCO Section 278.410 has been therefore revised to include the payment of those filing fees to the contracted vendor.

MCO Section 278.420 has been amended to create a new Section 278.425 to clarify the minimum qualifications for the Minneapolis Plumber/Gas Fitter Certificate exam. Minnesota Statutes 326.40 establishes rules for examination for plumbers to be licensed in cities having 5,000 or more in population.

The new MCO Section 278.425 specifies these requirements as a prerequisite to qualifying for the Minneapolis exam. The new section also references this State Statute.

Lastly, the appeals process for any person aggrieved by any administrative decision, including an administrative decision by the vendor in the application process, will remain with the City. It was suggested by the City Attorney's office to have two sections relative to the appeals process: one for the applications process (the revised MCO Section 278.440) and another (new MCO Section 278.515) for the comp card denial process. The appeals language and process essentially remains the same.

Overall these changes will provide better customer service. Comp card applicants will be able to conveniently apply for their comp card tests with the same company that provides the testing. The application processing certainly should be faster by using dedicated contract staff. Also the processing of successful candidates will be more efficient by eliminating the transfer of information from HR to the vendor.

These ordinance changes will go into effect January 1, 2005. This will allow time to effectively transfer the application screening services to Experior Assessments, LLC. This will also include time to properly communicate the changes in service delivery to all affected parties.