

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
One Ashburton Place: Room 503
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-2293

JAMES A. AMATO,
Appellant

v. B2-21-044

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION,
Respondent

Appearance for Appellant: *Pro Se*
James A. Amato

Appearance for Respondent: Emily Sabo, Esq.
Human Resources Division
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114

Commissioner: Christopher C. Bowman

ORDER OF DISMISSAL

1. On February 25, 2021, the Appellant, James A. Amato (Appellant), a firefighter in the City of Lawrence (City), filed an appeal with the Civil Service Commission, contesting the decision of the state's Human Resources Division (HRD) not to award him any education and experience points on a recent promotional examination for fire lieutenant.
2. On March 30, 2021, I held a remote pre-hearing conference which was attended by the Appellant and counsel for HRD.
3. As part of the pre-hearing conference, the parties stipulated to the following:
 - A. The Appellant is a firefighter in the City of Lawrence.
 - B. On November 21, 2020, the Appellant took the promotional examination for Fire Lieutenant.
 - C. The deadline for completing the Education and Experience (E&E) portion of the examination was November 28, 2020.
 - D. On January 19, 2021, HRD informed the Appellant that he had received a written score of 77.69; a 0 on the E/E portion for failing to complete the E/E portion; and a failing overall score.

- E. The Appellant filed a timely appeal with HRD, arguing that he had completed the E&E portion of the examination.
 - F. Having no record of the Appellant completing the E/E portion of the examination, HRD denied the Appellant's appeal on February 24, 2021.
 - G. The Appellant filed a timely appeal of HRD's determination on February 25, 2021.
4. As part of the pre-hearing conference, I asked the Appellant if he had a confirmation email from HRD indicating that he completed the online E/E portion of the examination. The Appellant produced the confirmation for applying for the examination and an auto-reply email from HRD when he submitted the supporting documentation. He was unable to produce a confirmation email showing that he completed the online E/E portion of the examination. I informed the Appellant that, absent such verification, it is likely that he would be unable to prevail in his appeal, consistent with numerous prior Commission decisions.
 5. At my request, HRD agreed to work with the Appellant to determine if he ever initiated the E/E online application, after which the Appellant had 10 days to inform the Commission whether he wishes to move forward with his appeal with the Commission.
 6. On April 7, 2021, HRD informed the Commission that an HRD representative, the Appellant and counsel for HRD met remotely to determine whether the Appellant had initiated his E&E claim. According to HRD: "In logging into his account, we determined that Mr. Amato had not initiated his E&E claim. We discussed it, and Mr. Amato had submitted and paid for his application to take the exam but had not initiated or completed his E&E claim, not realizing it was a separate requirement that opened later."
 7. The Appellant did not notify the Commission if he wished to move forward with the appeal.

Legal Standard for Summary Disposition

An appeal may be disposed of on summary disposition when, "viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the non-moving party", the undisputed material facts affirmatively demonstrate that the non-moving party has "no reasonable expectation" of prevailing on at least one "essential element of the case". See, e.g., Milliken & Co., v. Duro Textiles LLC, 451 Mass. 547, 550 n.6, (2008); Maimonides School v. Coles, 71 Mass.App.Ct. 240, 249 (2008); Lydon v. Massachusetts Parole Board, 18 MCSR 216 (2005).

Applicable Civil Service Law

G.L. c. 31, § 2(b) addresses appeals to the Commission regarding persons aggrieved by "...

any decision, action or failure to act by the administrator, except as limited by the provisions of section twenty-four relating to the grading of examinations” It provides, *inter alia*, “No decision of the administrator involving the application of standards established by law or rule to a fact situation shall be reversed by the commission except upon a finding that such decision was not based upon a preponderance of evidence in the record.”

Pursuant to G.L. c. 31, § 5(e), HRD is charged with: “conduct[ing] examinations for purposes of establishing eligible lists.” G.L. c. 31, § 22 states in relevant part: “In any competitive examination, an applicant shall be given credit for employment or experience in the position for which the examination is held.”

G.L. c. 31 § 24 allows for review by the Commission of exam appeals. Pursuant to § 24, “[t]he commission shall not allow credit for training or experience unless such training or experience was fully stated in the training and experience sheet filed by the applicant at the time designated by the administrator.”

In Cataldo v. Human Resources Division, 23 MCSR 617 (2010), the Commission stated that “... under Massachusetts civil service laws and rules, HRD is vested with broad authority to determine the requirements for competitive civil service examinations, including the type and weight given as ‘credit for such training and experience as of the time designated by HRD’”.

Analysis

The facts presented as part of this appeal are not new to the Commission. In summary, promotional examinations, such as the one in question here, consist of two (2) components: the traditional written examination and the E&E component. HRD provides detailed instructions via email regarding how and when to complete the online E&E component of the examination. Most importantly, applicants are told that, upon completion of the E&E component, the applicant

will receive a confirmation email – and that the component is not complete unless and until the applicant receives this confirmation email.

Here, it is undisputed that the Appellant sat for the written component of the fire lieutenant examination on November 21, 2020. He had until November 28, 2020 to complete the online E&E component of the examination. The Appellant acknowledges that he never received a confirmation email from HRD stating that the E&E examination component was completed and HRD has no record of the Appellant completing the E&E component, but, rather, only receiving supporting documentation.

While I am not unsympathetic to the Appellant’s plight here, it is undisputed that: 1) HRD has no record showing that the Appellant completed the E&E component of the examination; 2) the Appellant did not receive a confirmation email verifying that he completed the E&E component; and, thus, 3) he is unable to show that he followed the instructions and actually completed the E&E component of this examination. Thus, this is not a case in which there is a genuine factual dispute that would require an evidentiary hearing.

Consistent with a series of appeals regarding this same issue, in which applicants have been unable to show that they followed instructions and submitted the online E&E claim, intervention by the Commission is not warranted as the Appellant cannot show that he was harmed through no fault of his own.

For this reason, the Appellant’s appeal under Docket No. B2-21-044 is *dismissed*.

Civil Service Commission

/s/ Christopher Bowman
Christopher C. Bowman
Chairman

By a vote of the Civil Service Commission (Bowman, Chairman; Camuso, Ittleman, Stein and Tivnan, Commissioners) on May 21, 2021.

Either party may file a motion for reconsideration within ten days of the receipt of this Commission order or decision. Under the pertinent provisions of the Code of Mass. Regulations, 801 CMR 1.01(7)(l), the motion must identify a clerical or mechanical error in this order or decision or a significant factor the Agency or the Presiding Officer may have overlooked in deciding the case. A motion for reconsideration does not toll the statutorily prescribed thirty-day time limit for seeking judicial review of this Commission order or decision.

Under the provisions of G.L. c. 31, § 44, any party aggrieved by this Commission order or decision may initiate proceedings for judicial review under G.L. c. 30A, § 14 in the superior court within thirty (30) days after receipt of this order or decision. Commencement of such proceeding shall not, unless specifically ordered by the court, operate as a stay of this Commission order or decision. After initiating proceedings for judicial review in Superior Court, the plaintiff, or his / her attorney, is required to serve a copy of the summons and complaint upon the Boston office of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth, with a copy to the Civil Service Commission, in the time and in the manner prescribed by Mass. R. Civ. P. 4(d).

Notice:

James A. Amato (Appellant)

Emily Sabo, Esq. (for Respondent)