

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 200  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 979-1900

Tracking Numbers: I-23-203; I-25-071

Re: Requests for Investigation regarding the Promotional Process and the April 2023 Sole Assessment Center examination for Police Captain in the Bridgewater Police Department

**RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR INVESTIGATION**

***Union Petitioners' Request and Commission's Initial Response***

On October 23, 2023, the Bridgewater Police Association, MCOP Local 387 (Union), filed a petition with the Civil Service Commission (Commission) asking the Commission to investigate “all aspects of administration and implementation of the civil service system on its own initiative or upon request of others, as specified in M.G.L. c. 31, §2(a)”. This investigation request appeared to be spurred by allegations that one or more members of the Bridgewater Police Department (BPD) sought to distort the administration of the April 2023 Sole Assessment Center examination to favor the appointment of a certain candidate to fill a vacancy in the position of BPD Police Captain.

A separate appeal by BPD Sergeant Kelly Chuilli (CSC No. G2-23-179) [the Chuilli Appeal] had been brought in September 2023; it also asserted that the same alleged irregularities in the administration of the April 2023 BPD Sole Assessment Center raised in the Union’s petition had also contributed to her unlawful bypass for promotion to BPD Lieutenant. Both this petition and the Chuilli Appeal were assigned to me for further proceedings.

Following a pre-hearing conference held on October 24, 2023 in the Chuilli Appeal, a full hearing in the Chuilli Appeal was scheduled. The Appellant in the Chuilli Appeal was substituted as the petitioner in the Union’s investigation request, with further proceedings in the investigation to be held concurrently with the hearing of the Chuilli Appeal. After a two-day evidentiary hearing, the Commission, on February 6, 2025, issued its decision in the Chuilli Appeal, allowing that appeal and prescribing the specific remedial actions to be taken to ensure that then-Sergeant Chuilli would receive a fair and lawful opportunity for immediate promotion to BPD Police Lieutenant. The findings and conclusions in the Commission’s [Decision](#) in the Chuilli Appeal are hereby incorporated herein by reference.

On March 6, 2025, the Commission received a Motion for Reconsideration in the Chuilli Appeal in which the Respondent informed the Commission that Sergeant Chuilli had been promoted to the position of Police Lieutenant effective March 6, 2025. On April 17, 2025, the Commission reconsidered its decision in the Chuilli Appeal and modified the relief to provide that the effective date of Lieutenant Chuilli’s promotion would be July 13, 2023, and that the civil service status of the previously appointed candidate who bypassed Sergeant Chuilli would be converted to a

temporary appointment effective July 14, 2023, and would remain temporary pending a further independent investigation by the Commission of the role of Lieutenant Hennessey, among others, in the alleged plan to orchestrate the 2023 promotional processes for BPD Lieutenant and Captain.

On March 14, 2025, the Commission received a bypass appeal (G2-25-070) from BPD Sergeant George Zanellato, the candidate who was ranked second on the BPD Lieutenant eligible list and also was bypassed in July 2023 by the appointment of the third ranked candidate on the list.

On March 16, 2025, the Commission received a separate request for investigation (I-25-071) from Sergeant Zanellato into “the promotional process of the Bridgewater Police Department from the 2023 assessment center for the position of Captain.”

### ***Commission’s Authority to Conduct Investigations***

The Commission, established pursuant to G.L. c. 7, § 4I, is an independent, neutral appellate tribunal and investigative entity. Section 2(a) of Chapter 31 grants the Commission broad discretion upon receipt of an alleged violation of the civil service law’s provisions to decide whether and to what extent an investigation might be appropriate.

Further, Section 72 of Chapter 31 provides for the Commission to “investigate all or part of the official and labor services, the work, duties and compensation of the persons employed in such services, the number of persons employed in such services and the titles, ratings and methods of promotion in such services.”

The Commission exercises its discretion to investigate only “sparingly,” typically only when there is clear and convincing evidence of systemic violations of Chapter 31 or an entrenched political or personal bias that can be rectified through the Commission’s affirmative remedial intervention.

### ***Commission’s Response***

The evidence I received during the hearing of the Chuilli Appeal established a credible basis to believe, subject to rebuttal, that the Appellant was asked to participate in an alleged plan to distort the administration of the April 2023 Captain’s Sole Assessment Center, by which the BPD’s preferred candidate would pay the Appellant’s registration fees, and the fees of other ranked officers, in exchange for a promise that the Appellant and others would not actually sit for the Sole Assessment Center—thus guaranteeing, or at least substantially increasing, the chance that the preferred candidate would get the promotion. Two other ranked officers reportedly went along with this alleged scheme, but the Appellant did not. She registered on her own for both the Lieutenant’s Sole Assessment Center and the Captain’s Sole Assessment Center. When she was awarded the top score in both assessment centers, the alleged plan was derailed, as the candidate who offered the payments was too low on the eligible list issued as a result of the Captain’s Assessment Center to come within the  $2n+1$  formula of candidates from which the selection of a Captain must be made. This evidence, alone, established a prima facie violation of basic merit principles of civil service law that requires further investigation by the Commission.

According to the information I received at the Chuilli hearing, after the results of the Assessment Centers were released, the BPD sought to work around the fact that the Appellant placed first on both the BPD Lieutenant's and BPD Captain's eligible lists, and the preferred candidate only placed fourth on the Captain's list. Specifically, the Appellant and the second ranked Sergeant on the Lieutenant's eligible list purportedly would be bypassed in favor of the third ranked Sergeant who agreed, upon promotion to Lieutenant, that he would withdraw from consideration for promotion to Captain, thus moving the preferred candidate into position for consideration under the  $2n+1$  formula. This information was, in part, hearsay testimony, but it carries a sufficient ring of truth to warrant further investigation. In fact, the Appellant and the second ranked Sergeant were bypassed by the third ranked candidate for Lieutenant. To date, no Captain has been appointed, but the preferred candidate now serves as the BPD's Executive Officer, the equivalent of the second-in-command rank of Captain.

After carefully reviewing the travel of these matters, I conclude that the preferred path for further proceedings would be an independent investigation by the Commission that is specifically targeted to the allegations of impropriety for which some evidence has been provided. A full-scale investigation into "all aspects of administration and implementation of the civil service system" by the BPD cuts too broadly. Similarly, the related request for investigation "into the promotional process of the Bridgewater Police Department from the 2023 assessment center for the position of Captain" is too narrowly drawn.

What needs further investigation is the possible misconduct that resulted in an alleged "quid pro quo" arrangement between two or more BPD officers to distort the selection process for BPD Captain, with or without the knowledge of the BPD command staff. Accordingly, I recommend that the Commission open a formal independent investigation limited to those specific allegations of the role of Lieutenant Hennessey, among others, in an alleged plan to orchestrate the 2023 promotional processes for BPD Lieutenant and Captain. All filings or correspondence in this new matter shall bear the tracking number I-25-106.

Civil Service Commission

/s/ Paul M Stein

Paul M. Stein  
Commissioner

On April 17, 2025, the Commission (Bowman, Chair; Dooley, Markey, McConney and Stein, Commissioners) voted to close the pending requests for investigation (I-23-203; I-25-071) and to open its own independent investigation, as recommended above, into the alleged violations of civil service law by certain members of the Bridgewater Police Department, limited to those specific allegations concerning the role of Lieutenant Hennessey, among others, in the alleged plan to orchestrate the 2023 promotional processes for BPD Lieutenant and Captain.

Notice:

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