

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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

LINCOLN HOLSKE,
Appellant

v.

B2-20-053

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION,
Respondent

Appearance for Appellant:

Pro Se
Lincoln Holske

Appearance for Respondent:

Melissa Thomson, Esq.
Human Resources Division
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114

Commissioner:

Christopher C. Bowman

DECISION ON RESPONDENT’S MOTION FOR SUMMARY DECISION

1. On March 19, 2020, the Appellant, Lincoln S. Holske (Appellant), filed an appeal with the Civil Service Commission (Commission), contesting the decision of the state’s Human Resources Division (HRD) to not award him any education and experience (E&E) credit for the Fire Lt. examination.
2. On May 19, 2020, I held a pre-hearing conference via videoconference 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. On 11/16/19, the Appellant took the Fire Lt. Examination.
 - b. The deadline for completing the E&E component of the examination was 11/23/19.
 - c. Although the Appellant has a recollection of completing the online E&E component on

- 11/21/19, HRD has no record of the Appellant completing this E&E component.
- d. The Appellant did not receive a confirmation email confirming that he completed the E&E online component of the examination.
 - e. The Appellant did submit supporting documentation to HRD on 11/21/19 including a diploma and employment verification form.
 - f. HRD sent the Appellant an email confirming receipt of the documents.
 - g. On 2/3/20, the Appellant received his score.
 - h. He received a written score of 71 and an E&E score of 0.
 - i. His total weighted score was 57.
 - j. The Appellant filed an appeal with HRD on 2/4/20.
 - k. HRD denied the Appellant's appeal on 3/2/20.
 - l. The Appellant filed a timely appeal with the Commission on 3/19/20.
 - m. The eligible list for Mansfield Fire Lt. was established on 5/3/20.
 - n. The Appellant is not on the eligible list.
 - o. Two candidates are on the eligible list.
4. At the pre-hearing conference, the Appellant reiterated his belief that he did indeed complete the E&E online component and submitted the documentation the same day. Upon receiving the confirmation email from HRD regarding the supporting documentation, he believed that this was the confirmation email referenced in the instructions.
 5. HRD had 30 days to file a Motion for Summary Decision and the Appellant had 30 days thereafter to file a reply.
 6. HRD filed a Motion for Summary Decision. The Appellant did not submit a reply.

Legal Standard for Motion for Summary Decision

A motion for summary decision may be filed pursuant to 801 C.M.R. 1.01(7)(h). These motions are decided under the well-recognized standards for summary disposition as a matter of law, i.e., “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 Mr. Holske sat for the written component of the Fire Lieutenant examination on November 16, 2019. He had until November 23, 2019 to complete the online E&E component of the examination. According to Mr. Holske, on November 21, 2019, he completed the E&E module and submitted it electronically. Mr. Holske acknowledges, however, that he never received a confirmation email from HRD stating that the E&E examination component was completed. HRD has no record of Mr. Holske completing the E&E component, but, rather, only receiving supporting documentation.

While I am not unsympathetic to Mr. Holske’s plight here, it is undisputed that: 1) HRD has no record showing that Mr. Holske completed the E&E component of the examination; 2) Mr. Holske 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 (i.e.. he did not contest HRD's motion and raised no factual dispute as to whether or not he completed the E&E component and received a confirmation as required.) 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, Mr. Holske's appeal under Docket No. B2-20-053 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 August 27, 2020.

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:

Lincoln S. Holske III (Appellant)
Melissa Thomson, Esq. (for Respondent)