

RG 7 Civil Service Commission (1919-present)

History

A 1919 amendment to the city charter established the Baltimore City Service Commission ("civil" was exchanged for "city" in the agency's title in 1960). The mayor appointed three unpaid commissioners for six years, and the commissioners annually elected one of their number as president. The commissioners in turn appointed a salaried chief examiner who acted as both the secretary of the commission and the administrator of examinations.

Creation of the commission in 1919 marked the culmination of a lengthy effort to reorganize city personnel matters. The commission was authorized to classify and re-classify all municipal jobs (with the exception of mayoral appointments and appointments involving teaching or supervisory work) and to make appointments based on a merit system. The 1946 city charter empowered the commission to establish additional classes when deemed necessary and to rule on both individual and group appeals concerning such matters as leave, dismissals, and transfers. Also required of the commission was maintenance of eligibility lists for classified positions.

The commission was instrumental in the establishment of a general municipal pension and retirement system in 1926. This plan was the first of its kind in Baltimore and provided retirement, disability, and death benefits for municipal employees. A board of trustees determined the eligibility of employees for benefits from the retirement fund. In conjunction with creation of the fund, the commission established a mandatory retirement age of 70 for civil service employees.

Although there were sporadic attempts to improve the efficiency of the commission, the first successful effort came in 1954. The commission at that time hired an independent company to develop classification, wage, and salary policies. Additional studies were conducted in subsequent years in an effort to improve city personnel functions.

Records Summary

The most important records for tracing the history of the municipal civil service are the minutes of the commission. The first few years of minutes describe general organizational matters. From 1922 to 1950 the minutes mainly concern classifications and transfers, leaves, and dismissals of individual employees. After 1950 the minutes generally discuss examinations and special group appeals. The remainder of the records consist of general administrative records of the commission and personnel records. Personnel records are restricted and require prior authorization before their use.