

Police Captain Promotions

Understanding the Process, Candidates, Selection, and Impact



WHAT ARE CAPTAIN PROMOTIONS?

The captain promotions are an opportunity for the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) to promote lieutenants or secure provisional captains (formally known as “commanders”) into leadership positions within the department. This process was initiated because of a series of lawsuits and Consent Decree reforms to change how leadership promotions were determined in the past.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This process can also alter the current leadership structure the NOPD and the community has come to rely on and know. Because of the elimination of commanders as well as the re-implementation of classified captains, provisional captains who have successfully led districts and bureaus may lose their leadership position at the end of this process. There will be changes and potentially massive adjustments for both the NOPD and the community it seeks to serve. Additionally, the leadership positions will now be Civil Service protected, which may make it more difficult for ineffective leaders to be removed quickly or successfully.

This process matters. It will affect the community and the NOPD.

- First, the captain position is extraordinarily important within the leadership framework of the NOPD. Captains influence policing strategy which can impact public safety, accountability within the department, the commitment to police reforms, and the creation of positive and safe working environments for NOPD employees. These positions must be filled with the best candidates available.
 - Second, this captain promotional process is another step in ensuring the NOPD is compliant with state law and putting reforms required under the Consent Decree into practice. The Consent Decree Section XIV: Performance Evaluations and Promotions requires that the NOPD work with Civil Service to create clear guidelines and promotional criteria “to prioritize effective, constitutional, and community-ordinated policing” and ensure that the promotion of officers is both “ethical and effective.”
 - Third, this process will ensure that all eligible officers are able to fairly access and compete for the desired leadership positions in a transparent and consistent manner.
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THE ROLE OF POLICE OVERSIGHT

The Office of the Independent Police (OIPM) monitored the captain interviews and the subsequent deliberation of scoring that were conducted by the Deputy Chiefs of the NOPD. The Acting Independent Police Monitor monitored the interviews, assessing both the format and process, and providing input and assessments on the strength, content, and thoroughness of the candidate’s responses. The Acting Independent Police Monitor contributed to the interpretation and analysis of the candidate’s job history, performance evaluations, and disciplinary history during the scoring deliberations.

Police Captain Promotions

COMMANDERS, PROVISIONAL CAPTAINS, AND THE CREATION OF THE CAPTAIN PROMOTION PROCESS

Before 2011, eligible lieutenants would take the captains test administered by Civil Service to receive a promotion to the coveted leadership position. Under Chief Serpas and continued under Chief Harrison, the NOPD created and maintained a “commander” position. The commander position was unclassified – meaning it was not regulated by the Civil Service. This enabled the Chief of Police to make discretionary leadership changes as the Chief required – promoting and removing leadership as determined appropriate based on performance and ability to serve in the role. Commanders were selected from both those qualified and eligible to be captains under Civil Service Rules and lieutenants who had never previously sat for or passed the captains exam. Commanders led districts and specialized units within the NOPD until 2019, when a legal challenge was mounted by current NOPD captains.



Above: Provisional Captain Richardson who currently leads the Public Integrity Bureau.

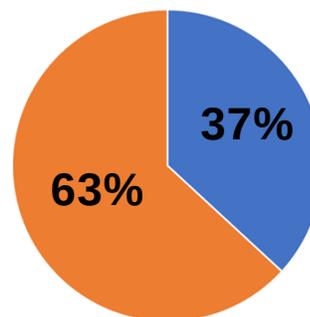
The lawsuit challenged the commander role for numerous reasons, arguing those unclassified commanders were performing the same duties as classified captains and this was a violation of the state constitution since the commander position avoided civil service regulations and oversight. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal ordered the NOPD to dismantle the unclassified commander position and return to the classified captain position. For this reason, current lieutenants and former unclassified commanders (now referred to as “provisional captains”) were required to sit for the captains exam and formally apply for this leadership position. It has taken two years for a test to be administered by Civil Service.

WHAT IS THE PANO LAWSUIT REGARDING CAPTAINS?

The Police Association of New Orleans (PANO) is a local police association that acts like a union and represents the concerns of their membership. PANO filed for a legal injunction to stop the promotion of sergeants over the summer and raised similar concerns during the captain promotions. The position of PANO is that basing promotion decisions on factors aside from Civil Service test scores opens the candidates and the process to the subjective criteria and possible favoritism. PANO stated that only test scores will ensure the process remains “merit-based, apolitical promotions mandated by the Louisiana Constitution.”

In response to these concerns, the NOPD created a scoring rubric for each of the four (4) categories being assessed to eliminate the perception of subjectivity or favoritism. This material is public record. Upon the completion of the selection process, the NOPD shared the scoring rubrics as well as justifications for each candidate's score upon request.

HOW MANY OF THE CANDIDATES WERE PROVISIONAL CAPTAINS



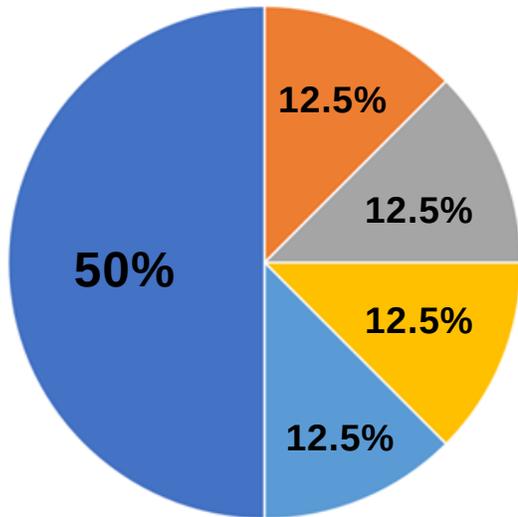
Of the 38 eligible candidates, here are the current ranks of the candidates:

- 37% (14) Provisional Captains
- 63% (24) Lieutenants

Police Captain Promotions

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection process was created to ensure fairness in the promotion decisions. The selection process was created by the NOPD and Civil Service with review and feedback from police monitors. Each decision is based on the following criteria:



- 50%** ■ **Civil Service Exam**
(candidates are ranked based on test performance and score)
- 12.5%** ■ **Interview with the Deputy Chiefs of the NOPD**
- 12.5%** ■ **Prior Performance Evaluations**
- 12.5%** ■ **Disciplinary History**
- 12.5%** ■ **Job History**
(upward trajectory in the candidate's employment at NOPD)

To comply with CAO Policy Memorandum 143(R) "Promotions Procedure for Classified, Non-Civilian (Commissioned) Positions," the Promotions Committee convened to review materials and held in-person interviews with all candidates on the current Captains promotional list. Each candidate was evaluated by the committee and scored as HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW in three areas: 1) performance evaluations, 2) disciplinary history, and 3) job history. These three scores were also combined with a personal interview score, formulated with the oversight of the federal Consent Decree monitoring team and Department of Justice, to derive a measurement of each candidate's potential to perform at a high level as an NOPD Captain.

HOW WAS THE INTERVIEW CONDUCTED?

The interview was limited to seven (7) questions and the answers were graded on a "low," "medium," and "high" scale based on a rubric that defined what a low, medium, or high answer would include. Each candidate had the same amount of time to answer the questions. The interviews were conducted by the five (5) deputy-chiefs. The questions topics included:

1. Why the candidate wants to be a captain and is the most qualified for this position.
2. What, if any, discipline has been taken against the candidate and lessons learned.
3. Identifying the candidate's leadership style and providing an example.
4. How the candidate navigated a corrective action towards a subordinate(s) and the result.
5. How the candidate has participated in the reform efforts made by the NOPD and how the candidate will continue sustain reforms.
6. Defining implicit bias and describing how the candidate may have experienced or handled implicit bias.
7. Identifying a challenge currently facing the NOPD today and explaining how as a captain, the candidate would address that challenge.

The panel conducting the interviews were limited to only three possible follow up questions including requesting the candidate to provide examples or more information or describe the answer.

Each answer had to be scored separately and answers from one question could not be extended to the score of another answer. The interview represented 12.5% of the candidate's final score.

Police Captain Promotions

OIPM ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: INTERVIEWS

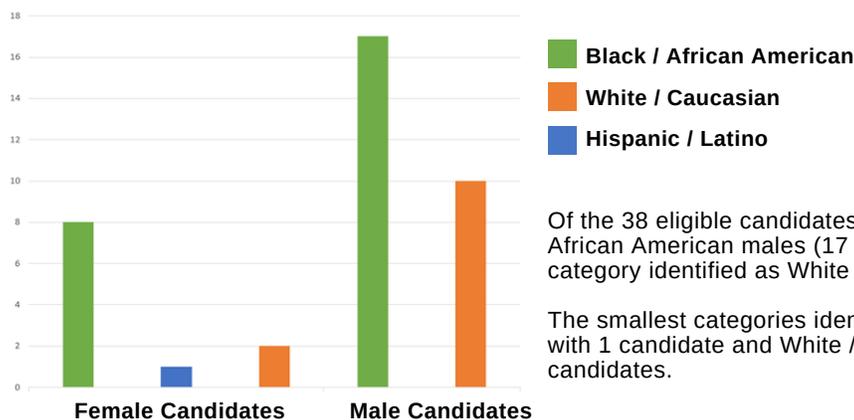
The OIPM appreciates the efforts put into place to ensure consistency and fairness in this internal promotion. The OIPM confirmed and watched to verify the same questions, format, rubric, and scoring were utilized for all interviews and final candidate scoring. The OIPM concludes this was a fair and consistent process to select the captain candidates, conducted in compliance with both the CAO Policy Memorandum 143(R) and NOPD policy.

The OIPM puts forth the following assessments and recommendations regarding the interview process:

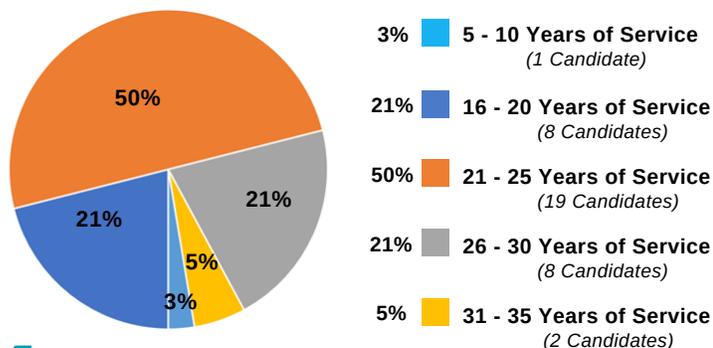
- The interview format was confining. In order to ensure fairness, there was no opportunity for individuality or for the information presented to be vetted. The panel weighed the question based on the information provided - and did not consider if the candidate exaggerated his or her known role in an accomplishment or minimized known problematic behavior. Effectively, each candidate was treated like a stranger and the panel acted as though they did not have the institutional knowledge that they had and, in OIPM's assessment, should be considered.
- The OIPM encourages the panel to utilize the agreed upon follow up questions to gain additional clarity, remind candidates to provide examples, and enable the candidates to explain their thinking. Follow up questions were underutilized during the interview process. Similarly, the OIPM recommends building into the follow up questions an ability to respond to or challenge a candidate's response where necessary and appropriate.
- The OIPM recommends when scoring a question the panel consider answers, content, or examples from previous answers provided within the same interview. If the candidate provided a powerful example in answering one question that could also extend to another answer, the panel should have the ability to consider content across different answers and score accordingly.
- The OIPM recommends the panel anticipate how to address "closing statements" or additional information that is provided at the end of the interview to clarify or build on previous answers. There was no formal process that enabled the panel to consider such additional information.

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES

RACE AND GENDER



YEARS OF POLICING SERVICE AT THE NOPD



Of the 38 eligible candidates, here is how many **years of service** the candidates had with the NOPD.

The majority of the candidates had between 21 - 25 years of service.

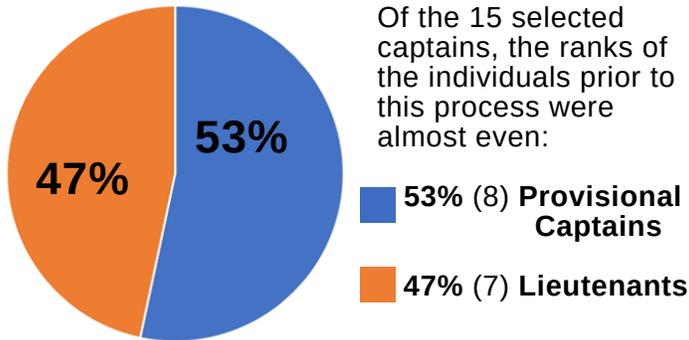
One candidate appeared to have 6 years experience with the NOPD, however, technically that candidate had previously worked for NOPD prior to 2014 for multiple years and came back in 2015 to NOPD.

Police Captain Promotions

THE NEW CAPTAINS: BREAK DOWN OF DEMOGRAPHICS

Through the scoring process, 30 out of the 38 candidates moved up or down 5 places or less. 5 of the 30 candidates did not move in rank at all. And 3 candidates moved 10 places.

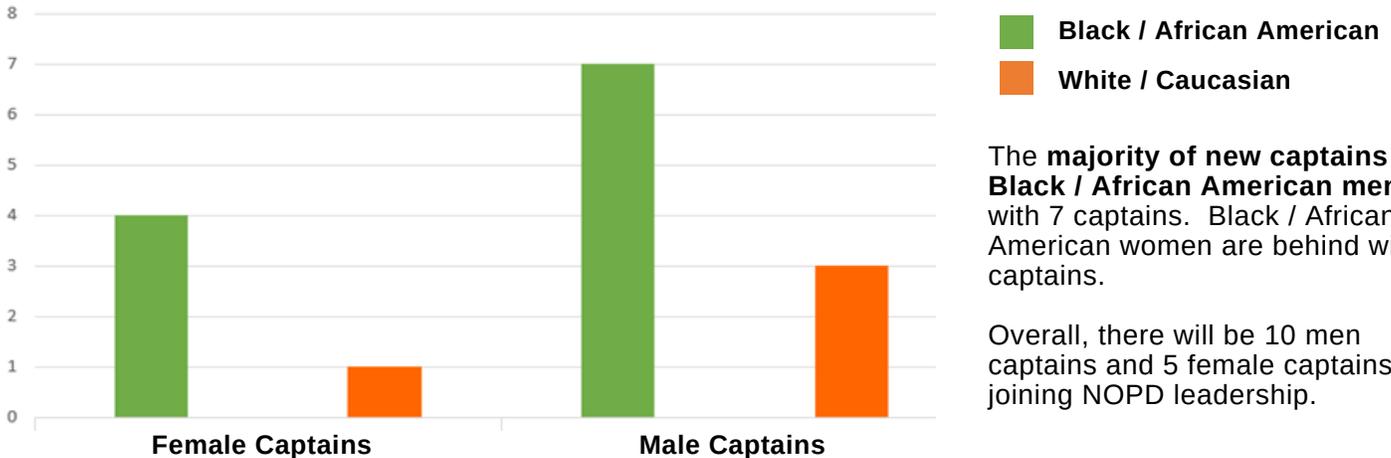
HOW MANY OF THE NEW CAPTAINS WERE PROVISIONAL CAPTAINS OR LIEUTENANTS



Above: Provisional Captain Walls walks the beat with his district.

This means there were 7 former provisional captains who will no longer be captains and will return to their previous rank of lieutenant. As the NOPD considers the leadership assignments and where the new promoted captains will be assigned, the NOPD will also assign the lieutenants to the departments where their leadership skills will be best utilized.

RACE AND GENDER: SELECTED CAPTAINS



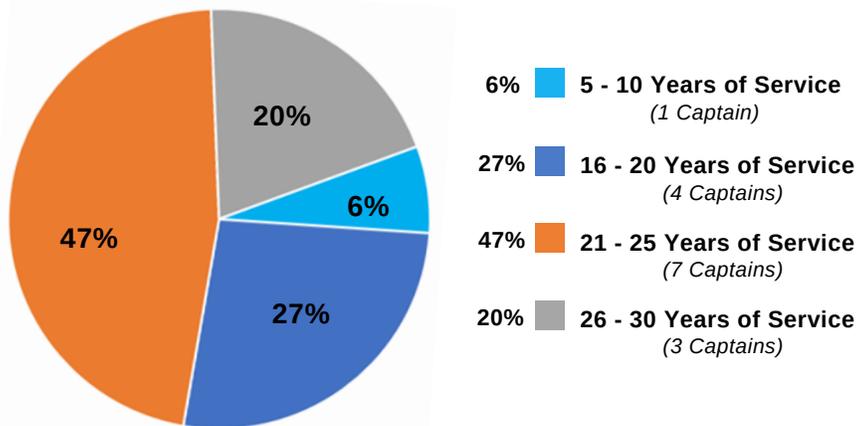
The majority of new captains are Black / African American men with 7 captains. Black / African American women are behind with 4 captains.

Overall, there will be 10 men captains and 5 female captains joining NOPD leadership.

Police Captain Promotions

THE NEW CAPTAINS: BREAK DOWN OF DEMOGRAPHICS

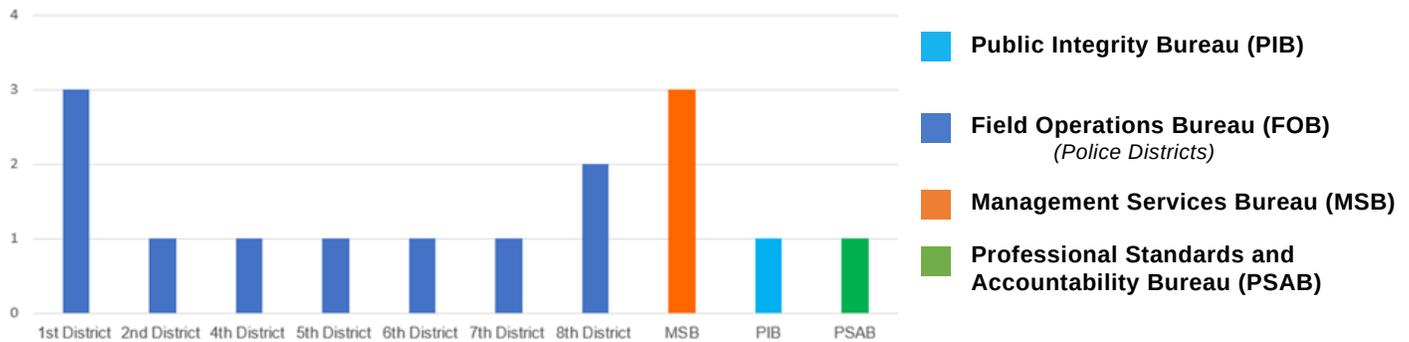
YEARS OF POLICING SERVICE AT THE NOPD



Almost all the newly selected captains have **over 15 years of NOPD experience**. Only one captain has less than 10 years of policing experience with the NOPD.

The majority of the newly selected captains have between 21 - 25 years of experience policing at the NOPD.

WHERE WERE THE SELECTED CANDIDATES ASSIGNED (PRIOR)



The majority of the newly selected captains come from the Field Operations Bureau (FOB). 10 of the captains selected were from FOB (which is 67% of the new captains). These captains worked in the police districts serving the community as either lieutenants or provisional captains.

NEXT STEPS: THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW LEADERSHIP

Of the 38 candidates, 15 of those officers are promoted to captain. Upon their promotions, those officers will be assigned to new positions within the districts and bureaus as needed. Former provisional captains who are not promoted to captain will return to the rank of lieutenant and will be assigned as determined appropriate by NOPD leadership. All captains will be required to complete a yearlong probationary period.

The Office of the Independent Police Monitor will monitor these captains in their new capacity to ensure that these individuals comply with the requirements expected of them, are effective in their leadership, supportive of those they supervise, instill necessary accountability measures, and are engaged and responsive to the communities they seek to serve.

Police Captain Promotions

OIPM ASSESSMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: SCORING

The OIPM concludes this was a fair and consistent process to select the captain candidates, conducted in compliance with both the CAO Policy Memorandum 143(R) and NOPD policy. Though the process was a dramatic improvement from the past, and it was consistent and fair, the process could be significantly better to ensure that these leadership positions (that effectively have lifetime terms) are filled with the best candidates for the job. Now, the OIPM puts forth the following recommendations to NOPD leadership to continue to improve the promotional process.

In the scoring structure:

- The scoring process would have benefited from scoring guides assigning values to job experiences, trainings, and awards. The OIPM recommends a “key” or a scoring guide for NOPD assignments to create a consistent standard by which to compare positions to other positions so to determine if moves between districts or assignments are lateral or progressive within the department and if additional responsibility was gained (for example specialized units may be scored differently). Similarly, trainings and education should have value assessments based on the depth of the training, the length of the training, and specialization. Awards, similarly, should be valued differently based on the type of the award, whether it was awarded to the individual or a group, and possibly when it was received.
- The OIPM recommends requiring the candidates present prior job experience within the NOPD in chronological order. The OIPM also recommends that the NOPD utilize the Human Resources Department to construct a chronological order of the candidates’ previous experience so the selection committee could have a clear and shared understanding of “advanced progression” and regressions in a candidate’s career and verify the information provided by the candidate.
- In the scoring for job history, the OIPM recommends that future scoring weighs and values job experience more than education and awards.

In order to ensure effective future promotional decisions, the OIPM recommends the NOPD address and eliminate any “transfer culture” that may exist within the department and distort promotional criteria. Problematic or weak performances should be documented, reflected in consistent performance evaluations, and addressed through training or counseling instead of the individual being transferred to a different district or bureau.

Finally, the OIPM appreciates the efforts made to ensure equality; however, this created a system that did not consider the unique strengths, weaknesses, growth or lack of growth, and experience or knowledge of the candidates. Simply put, the leadership abilities of some of these candidates were not proven through this process and more flexibility in the scoring, interviews, and the assessments would have enabled more comprehensive reviews of the candidates and possibly more successful selections.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Office of the Independent Police Monitor congratulates all the newly promoted captains on their achievement. Becoming a member of the NOPD leadership team is a great privilege and responsibility. The Office of the Independent Police Monitor looks forward to seeing all that these new captains accomplish. As these leaders start interacting with their teams and the public, the Office of the Independent Police Monitor welcomes feedback on the performance of these captains, and all NOPD officers, from the community.



Above: Former Provisional Captain, and now Captain Roberts with his team meets with a member of the community.