

# The Merit System



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2009 Semi-Annual Report

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The Personnel Board of Jefferson County

## Three-Member Board

Name	Office
Alfred F. "Buddy" Smith	Chairman Place #1
L. Kenneth Moore	Associate Member Place #2
Ann Florie	Associate Member Place #3

## Citizens Supervisory Commission

Name	Office
Judge Alan King	Probate Judge, Chairman Jefferson County Courthouse
Russell Cunningham	President Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
James B. Wilson	Municipal Employee Representative
Dr. David S. McKee	President Jefferson County Medical Society
Dr. Thomas Westmoreland	President Samford University
Carolyn Harper	Chairwoman Birmingham Urban League
Dr. Carol Garrison	President University of Alabama at Birmingham
Hezekiah Jackson	President NAACP
Kirk Patrick	President Jefferson County Labor Council
Dr. Judy M. Merritt	President Jefferson State Junior College
Rev. Steve Small Jr.	President Interdenominational Minister's Alliance of Greater Birmingham
Donald R. McAlister	County Employee Representative
David Pollick	President Birmingham Southern College
Donna McCurry	President Jefferson County PTA
Dr. Perry W. Ward	President Lawson State Community College
Dr. George T. French	President Miles College

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Report Period  
November 1, 2008 – April 30, 2009

## Letter from the Director

May 19, 2009

Dear CSC Members:

November 20, 2009, marked a new beginning for the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. After three decades of employment-related litigation, the Board was released from its long-standing consent decree. An agency that in 2002 was ill-equipped both in terms of staff and infrastructure to provide even the most fundamental services or to execute its obligation to administer the civil service system for the county in a fair and non-discriminatory manner, emerged in 2008 as a strong and competent civil service agency fully capable of delivering a continually expanding level and quality of service to its constituents. Going forward, we are committed to building on our successes and are equally committed to not repeating the mistakes of the past.

I am proud of our many accomplishments, and I am particularly proud of the staff whose dedication and competency enabled the Board's transformation. Without their diligent efforts, their creativity, and their commitment to public service, it would not have been possible to accomplish so much.

There are more active registers in place today than at any time in the Board's history. Registers are being refreshed on regular cycles. The average time to provide a certification list to fill an existing vacancy is less than one hour. We continue to make significant strides in branding the Merit System as an employer of choice through aggressive and strategic recruitment and marketing efforts. We have increased our outreach to minority applicants, females and people with disabilities. And, we continue to find new ways to communicate with our constituencies through the enhancement of our websites and through the introduction of innovative approaches and cutting edge uses of technology in the workplace.

We are acutely aware that these successes have come with a price and that our member jurisdictions, especially in these difficult economic times, are struggling financially. We are committed to doing our part by finding new operational efficiencies, by protecting our physical and financial assets, and by implementing tight fiscal controls. We are pleased that the agency is realizing its fourth consecutive year of a declining budget.

The Personnel Board is proud to share its successes with you and thanks you for your support as we eagerly look forward to the challenges and opportunities of 2009 and beyond.

*Lorren Oliver*  
Personnel Director

## Who We Are

The Personnel Board of Jefferson County (PBJC) was established in 1935 by state statute as the human resources agency responsible for administering the civil service system in Jefferson County. PBJC is responsible for recruiting and assessing candidates for employment, creating hiring registers and for referring qualified candidates to hiring departments throughout the County. PBJC also performs other traditional HR activities such as classification and compensation, employee relations, and records management.

The governing statute, Act No. 248 of the Alabama legislature of 1945 (Enabling Act), sets forth the authority for and the regulations under which a county's civil service system operates in the State of Alabama.

The Act applies to all counties in the state with four-hundred thousand (400,000) or more inhabitants. Currently, this includes Jefferson and Mobile counties. Within counties having multiple municipalities, such as Jefferson, the Merit System is inclusive of municipalities having five thousand (5,000) or more inhabitants and whose borders lie geographically within the county. Police Officers of municipalities having two-thousand five hundred (2,500) inhabitants are also statutorily included. For purposes of inclusion, the population of the counties and their respective municipalities is counted as of the last official federal census.

Currently, employees of eighteen (18) municipalities throughout Jefferson County are part of the Merit System. These eighteen municipalities, together with several countywide entities such as The Jefferson County Department of Health, The Emergency Management Agency (EMA), the Jefferson County Commission, Judges, and the Personnel Board itself make up the twenty-three "jurisdictions" that are part of the Merit System of Jefferson County. There are approximately nine-thousand (9,000) employees throughout the twenty-three jurisdictions.

All employees of covered municipalities and the other defined countywide entities are automatically covered by the Merit System unless they are statutorily exempted. Some of the classes exempted by statute are: employees or appointees of the city or county Board of Education, teachers in public schools, elected officials, the judge of any court, resident physicians, and common laborers.

The Personnel Board of Jefferson County was established by the Enabling Act as the administrative body responsible for governing the county's Civil Service System, for providing human resource services to member jurisdictions, and for assuring compliance with the requirements contained within the Act. Compliance is accomplished through a set of Rules and Regulations that serve as the administrative and procedural guidelines applicable and adhered to by all Merit System jurisdictions and their respective employees.

Services provided by the Board include:

- Facilitating the hiring of qualified individuals to fill vacancies within the jurisdictions. The responsibility of the Personnel Board is to manage job requisitions, recruit, accept and screen applicants, test qualified applicants, and send names of qualified applicants who pass job-related, legally defensible tests to the employers within the Merit System.
- Managing and administering job classes and salary structures across the jurisdictions. The responsibility of the Personnel Board is to survey and develop class specifications via job evaluations and analyses, conduct salary surveys, establish compensation plans and salary schedules, and address position and salary management requests throughout the jurisdictions.
- Managing and maintaining employee history. The responsibility of the Personnel Board is to maintain the civil service record of employment for all employees under the Merit System. This includes employee set up upon hiring, administration of employee changes such as promotions, leaves of absence, merit increases, job class changes, and voluntary or involuntary separation.
- Managing and facilitating employee relations and employee development. The responsibility of the Personnel Board is to mediate employee appeals or grievances that are based on alleged violations of civil service protections, as well as administer the standards for performance management across the jurisdictions.

The Personnel Board of Jefferson County is an independent agency within the County and is not a part of any political, county, or municipal subdivision within the System. It reports to a Citizens' Supervisory Commission (CSC) comprised of seventeen (17) community leaders, including heads of local colleges, universities, and civic groups. The PBJC is governed by a three-member Board. Board members are appointed by the CSC and serve staggered six-year terms.

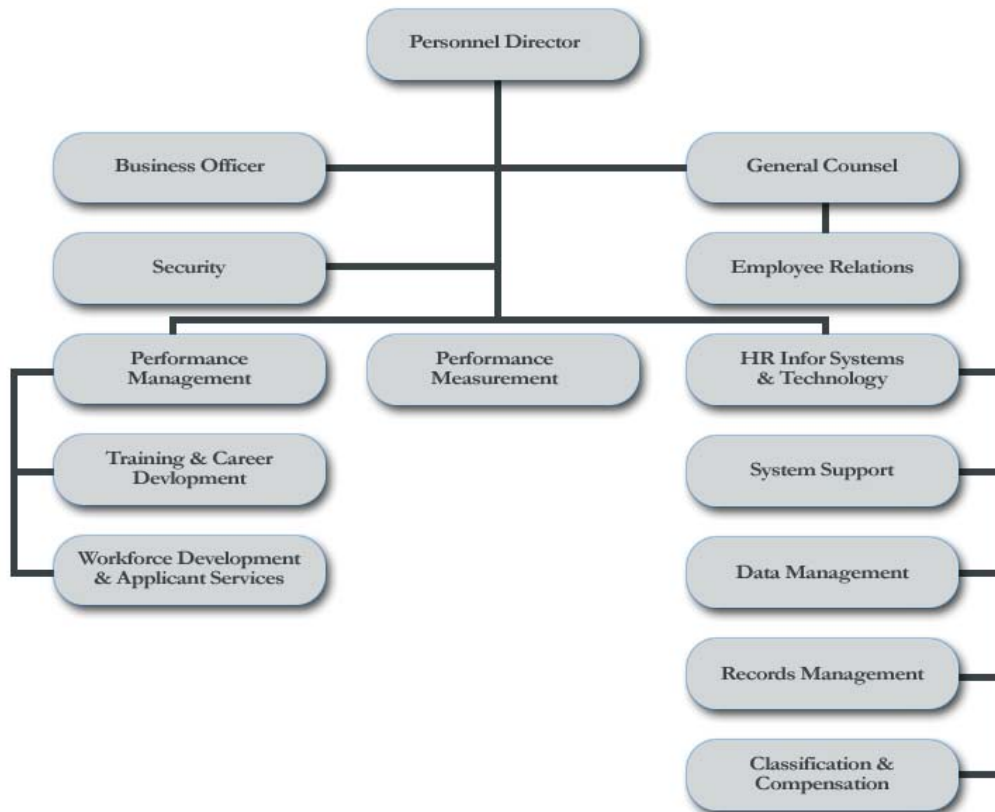
## Our Principles

The Personnel Board of Jefferson County is committed to establishing a standard of excellence in service to its member jurisdictions and to the greater Birmingham community and to becoming an agency recognized for professionalism, expertise, and integrity. To this end, in September 2005, the Personnel Board adopted seven principles by which it would operate. These principles serve as benchmarks against which the organization's success is measured.

- Maintain the highest professional, ethical, and legal standards in all our activities.
- Respond to service requests and inquiries in a timely, efficient, and competent manner.
- Keep the human resource needs of the jurisdictions central.
- Ensure efficient utilization and judicious accountability of all resources within our control.
- Communicate in an open, honest, respectful, and positive manner with each other and with our stakeholders.
- Find ways to add value and increase the return on investment for all of our stakeholders.
- Work to increase community awareness of the Board's services and activities.



# PJBC Organizational Chart



## Staff Changes

### Hires

Dale Frey  
 Karisa Morris  
 Brian Swords  
 Austin Tubbs

Assessment and Development Specialist  
 Assessment and Development Specialist  
 Assessment and Development Specialist  
 Information Technology Intern

### Separations

Greg James

Records Management Team Leader

November 20, 2008, was a momentous occasion for the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. It brought an end to what was perhaps one of the longest running and most expensive employment discrimination cases in United States history. After six years of receivership, the Board accomplished what had not been accomplished in the previous three decades. Federal oversight of the Board's testing practices and operations ended. Judge Lynwood Smith declared that the Board had met its obligations under the 1981 Consent Decree and the Board was left on its own to carry out the business of administering the civil service system for Jefferson County in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

Today, the Board has a clear mission. It has a well-developed infrastructure. It has policies and procedures in place to direct its business operations, and it has a knowledgeable and dedicated staff capable of fulfilling the Board's statutory obligations. It is against this backdrop that the semi-annual report for the period November 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009 is presented to the Citizens Supervisory Commission pursuant to §5 of the *Enabling Act* of the State of Alabama.

## **Agency Activities and Accomplishments**

- Both the Board's expenditures and the Board's budget have trended downward each year since 2004 and we continue to focus on cost containment. As our member jurisdictions struggle to meet their financial commitments, the Board in January implemented a hiring freeze for all but the most critical positions in order to further reduce its expenditures for this fiscal year. Additional cost-cutting measures included the suspension of staff development and travel, with the exception of those staff presenting papers at conferences, suspension of certain equipment replacement, and suspension of the purchase of new furniture.
- The metrics the Board uses to measure its success overall are up. Eleven thousand three hundred-seventy six applications were filed during the report period as the Board continued to make its presence known in the community by aggressively marketing the Merit System of Jefferson County as an employer of choice. This represents a 16.3% increase in applications per job announcement over this period one year ago. The number of qualified applicants for Registered Nurse increased by 119% over the same period one year ago and qualified Police Officer candidates were up by 83%. The number of jobs for which new hiring registers needed to be created before candidates could be referred to hiring departments reached a six-year low. Three quarters of all Merit System job classes now have up-to-date job analyses. Participants in the Board's training programs increased 30.4% from the same period last year and the Board continues to leverage its technology to improve its operational efficiencies and expand its services to member jurisdictions.
- A significant accomplishment during this report period was the publication of revised Rules and Regulations. The Rules and Regulations had last been revised in April, 2005. Beginning in October, 2007, the Board solicited suggestions and comments from appointing authorities, Merit System employees, and the general public. Proposed Rule changes were posted to the Board's website in late 2008 and further comments solicited. A Public Hearing was held on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and the final changes adopted by the Three-Member Board at its regular meeting on January 13, 2009. A redlined edition of the Rules and Regulations may be viewed on the Board's website at [www.pbjcal.org](http://www.pbjcal.org).

- As an employer, the Board is committed to establishing a work environment that fosters productivity, values diversity, supports a healthy work-life balance for its employees, and is fully compliant with state and federal laws affecting the workplace.
  - On January 28, 2008, President Bush signed into law an expansion of the Family Medical Leave Act to include leave for military personnel and their families. In response, the Board revised its FMLA policy to comply with the new changes.
  - Recognizing the need for employees to relax away from the office and spend quality time with their families, the Board provides regularly scheduled holidays, vacation and sick time. As a means of further supporting our employees' work-life balance, the Board approved a policy to allow employees to convert up to five days of accumulated sick leave to vacation leave in any calendar year. Employees must have at least twelve months service in the Merit System and maintain a minimum sick leave accrual balance.
- Recognizing the importance of leadership by example, every supervisor, manager, and team lead at the Board has now completed the Supervisory Certificate Program offered through the Board's Training and Career Development Department.
- Board staff have made a commitment to become more eco-friendly. Several months ago, a group of environmentally-conscious employees formed the PBJC Green Team and, in April, kicked off an initiative to raise the awareness of Board staff to issues of energy, paper and personal product consumption, waste reduction and recycling in the workplace. Recycling bins have been placed in strategic locations and employees are being encouraged to reuse paper and turn off lights and unplug appliances and equipment when not in use.

# Financial Report



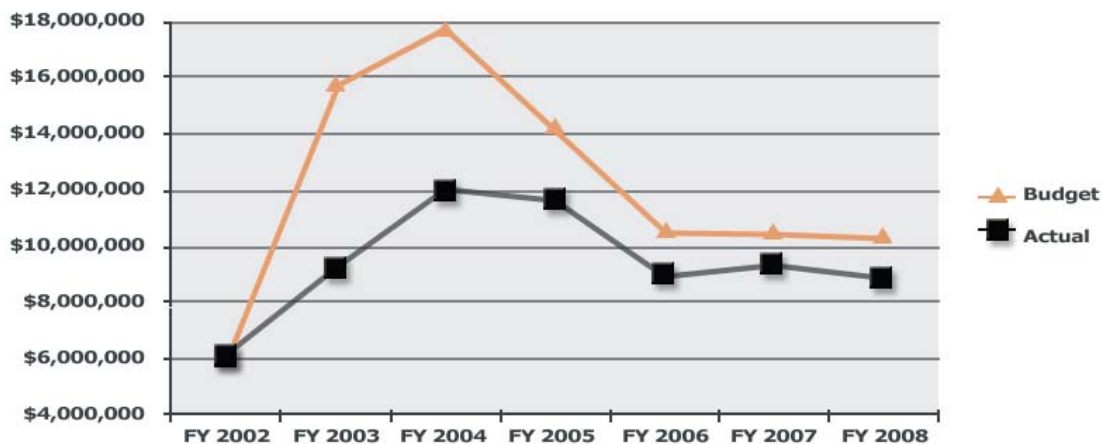
As the U.S. economic downturn continues to take its toll on local governments, the Personnel Board is conscientiously trying to identify ways of providing services at less cost, but with no degradation in quality. This means that the Board may have to delay planned initiatives or make other sacrifices.

As a first belt tightening measure, the Personnel Board implemented an immediate hiring freeze until further notice. This will require those areas affected to share an increased work load to assure there are no service lapses. As of this writing, the Board has eight unfilled vacancies representing a 10.7% reduction in its workforce.

The senior management team, as well as the staff, is engaged in ongoing discussions to find additional ways for our organization to responsibly address the current economic challenges. Even minor purchases and nominal expenditures are being carefully scrutinized. We are hopeful that these measures will be temporary in nature, but we are optimistic that they will result in new and lasting efficiencies within the organization.

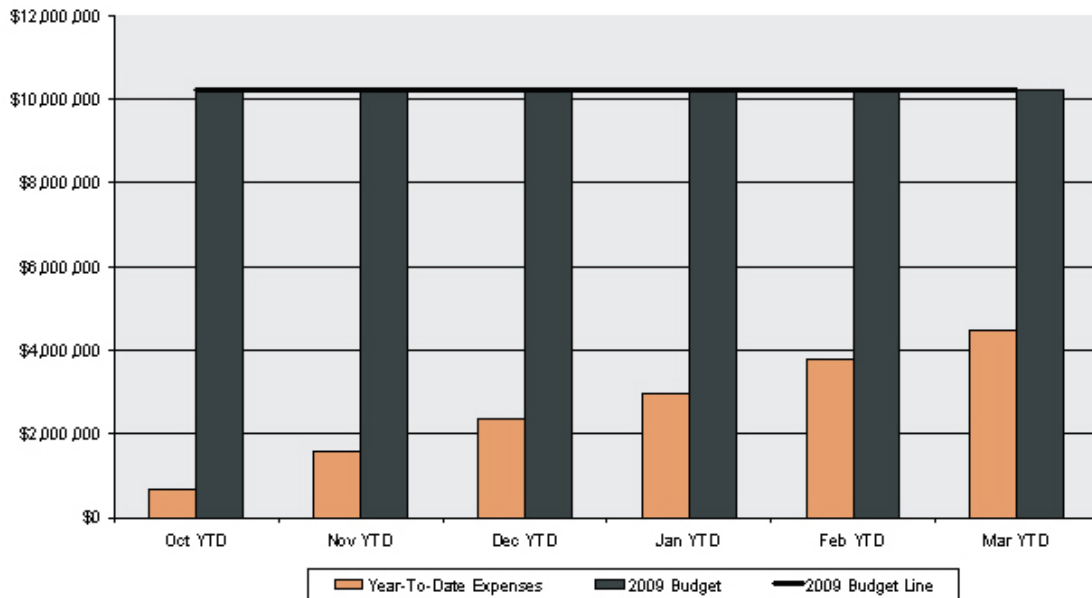
The Personnel Board continues to aggressively monitor its finances and protect its physical assets through internal financial controls, bi-annual inventory auditing and operating policies and procedures that direct the use of the Board resources. As testimony to the Board's diligence, the actual expenditures of the Board for FY2005-2006 were \$1,581,364.13 less than budget, for FY2006-2007 the actual expenditures were \$1,111,694.37 less than budget, and for FY2007-2008 the actual expenditures are \$1,486,450.00 less than budget.

Personnel Board of Jefferson County  
Actual Expenses vs Approved Budget  
Fiscal Years 2002-2008



For the first six months of fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2009 through March 30, 2009), the Personnel Board's financial report indicates that the Board has expended approximately \$4.5 million dollars and has \$639 thousand dollars in open purchase orders. Of the \$4.5 million dollars that has been expended, \$2.8 million dollars were expended in salaries and fringe benefits; \$206 thousand dollars were expended for annual maintenance support agreements related to our IT systems and Testing equipment as well as \$182 thousand dollars for the hosting of our Lawson system; \$459 thousand dollars for legal and hearing officer expenses; \$144 thousand dollars for advertising of Merit positions; \$123 thousand dollars for the modular furniture initiative; \$84 thousand dollars for the rental of hotel rooms for volunteer Testing assessors, \$62 thousand dollars in Other Professional Services; \$35 thousand dollars for Public Employment Liability and Business Liability Insurance; \$265 thousand dollars for lease payments to Jefferson County for the rental of office space in the 2121 Building; and \$172 thousand dollars in other items such as assessor meals and travel, recruitment travel to career events, office supplies, copier machine rentals, and publications. The Board has committed approximately 50% of its \$10.2 million budget.

**Personnel Board of Jefferson County  
Year-To-Date Expenditures  
Fiscal Year 2009**



## Department Reports

### Workforce Development and Applicant Services

Workforce Development and Applicant Services works to encourage individuals to consider careers in civil service and to market the Merit System as an employer of choice in the greater Birmingham area. The department is engaged in numerous recruiting and marketing activities, creates and posts job announcements through the Board's JobsQuest site, assists applicants in the employment process, and sends lists of qualified applicants to hiring departments throughout the Merit System. The department is committed to providing equal opportunity in the recruitment process on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, or veteran status to the full extent protected by the law.

### Recruiting and Marketing Activities

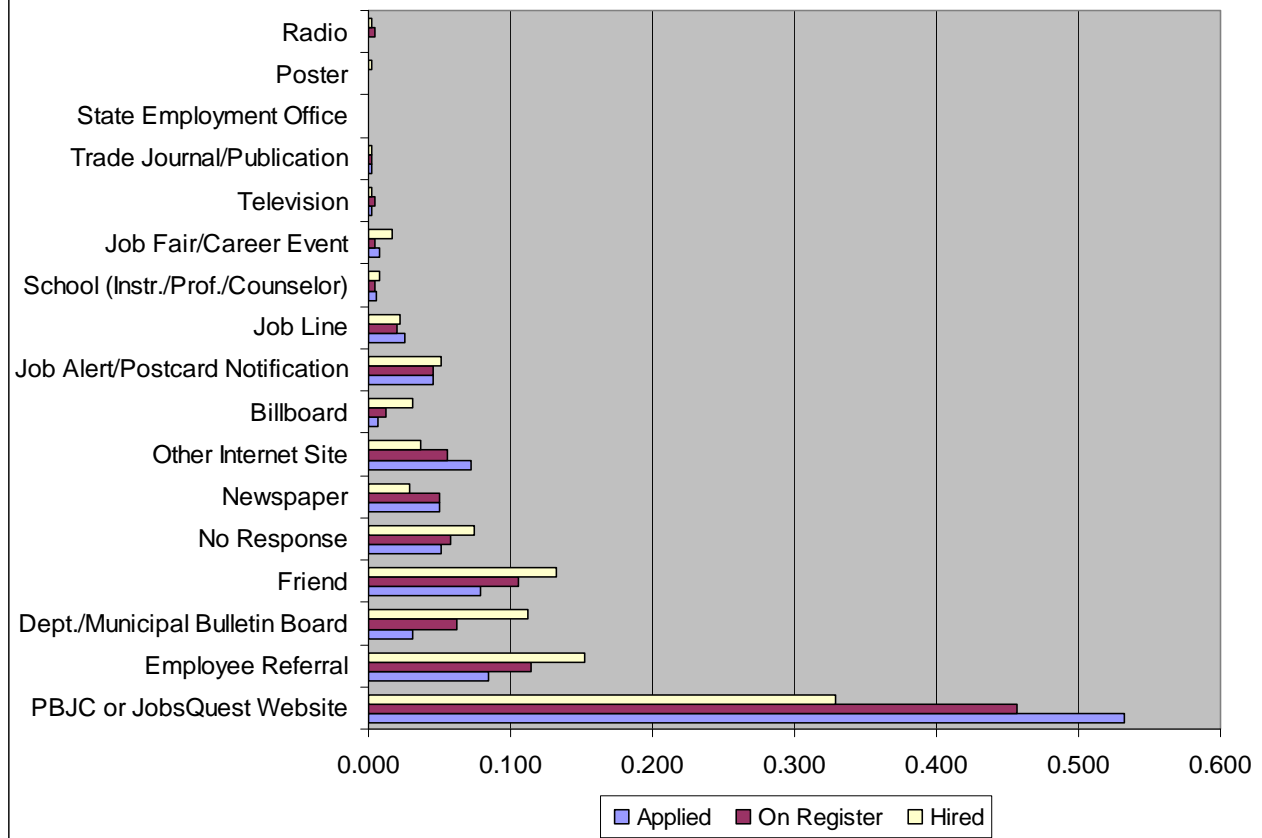


The Personnel Board's recruiting team endeavors to reach highly qualified and diverse individuals to ensure that the applicant pool mirrors the community. This is done through many marketing channels including career events, billboards, radio, television, internet postings, trade journals, newspapers, an employee referral program, and our own website ([www.jobsquest.org](http://www.jobsquest.org)) sends email *Job Alert* notices of openings to registered users.

### Applicant Source Data

The Personnel Board received 11,376 applications for 412 openings from November 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009. The staff closely monitors applicant source information to help better determine which marketing efforts are most effective. (See chart on following page.)

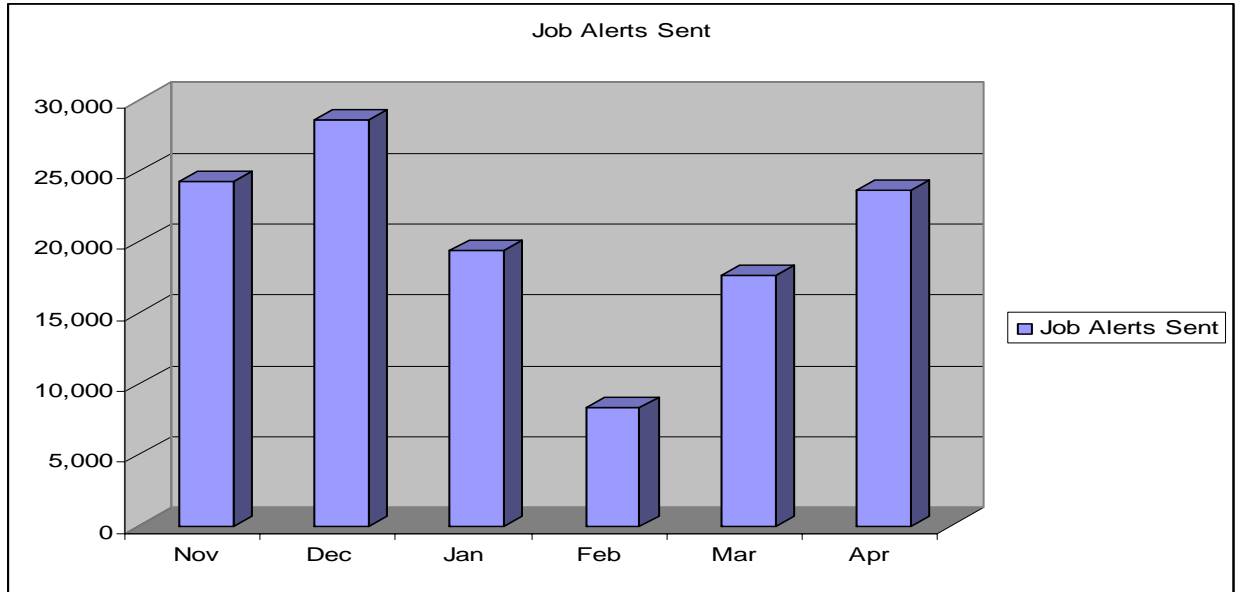
## Applicant Sources



<b>Source</b>	<b>Applied</b>	<b>On Register</b>	<b>Hired</b>
PBJC or JobsQuest Website	6057	2220	181
Employee Referral	965	554	84
Dept./Municipal Bulletin Board	358	302	62
Friend	901	512	73
No Response	584	280	41
Newspaper	574	242	16
Other Internet Site	827	270	20
Billboard	82	60	17
Job Alert/Postcard Notification	521	224	28
Job Line	286	96	12
School (Instr./Prof./Counselor)	67	22	4
Job Fair/Career Event	86	24	9
Television	20	21	1
Trade Journal/Publication	19	13	1
State Employment Office	13	2	0
Poster	1	1	1
Radio	15	19	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11376</b>	<b>4862</b>	<b>551</b>

## Job Alerts

121,894 Job Alert notices were sent from November 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009. Job Alert notifies an applicant by email when a job announcement is posted in which he or she has previously expressed interest.



## Career Events

Recruiters presented at 31 career events from November 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009.

Image below is Recruiting Representative Raymond Goolsby with a reporter from a local television station during a recruiting event at the Birmingham Police Academy.





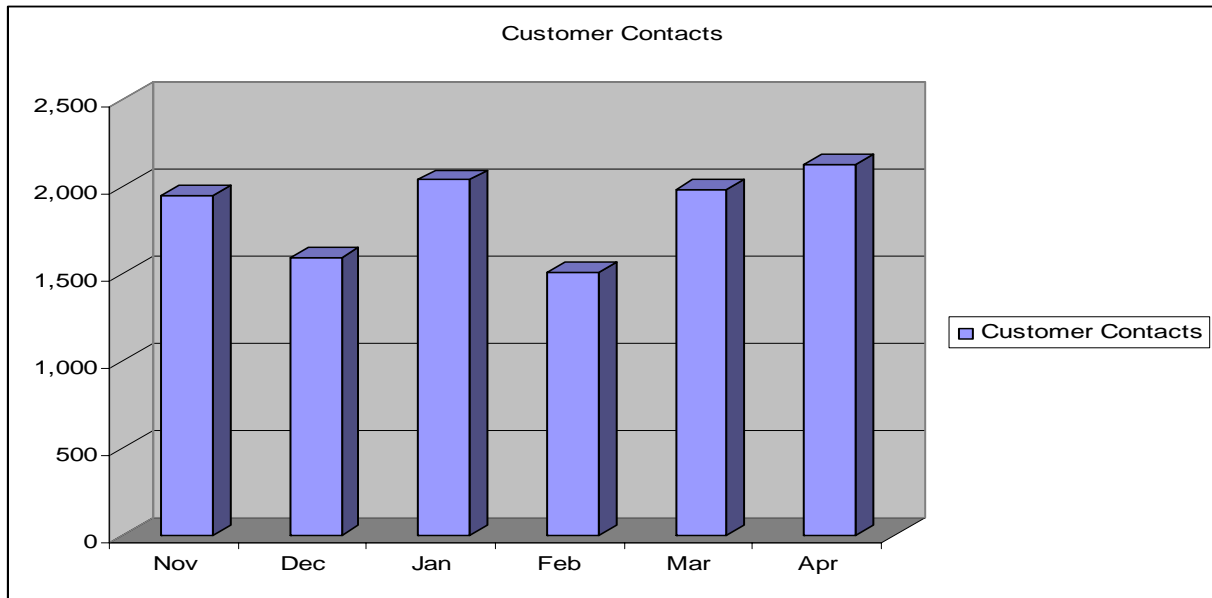
**Billboards**

Billboards placed in strategic locations are utilized to attract applicants to Merit System careers in law enforcement, firefighting, and nursing and have been an effective tool for branding the Board's JobsQuest site.



## Applicant Services

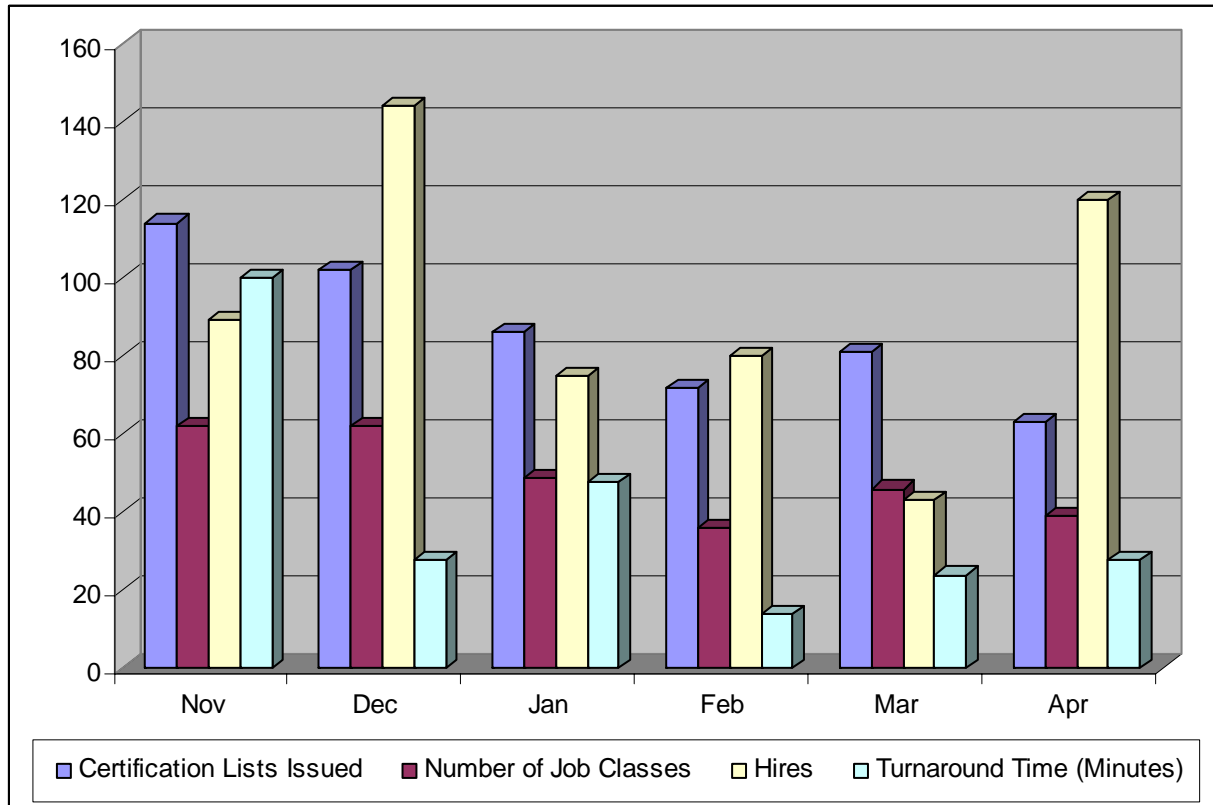
The Applicant Services staff provides direct assistance to applicants via telephone, email, and in person. Staff handled 11,200 customer contacts from November 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009.



## Certification

The Certification staff compiles lists (registers) of minimally qualified applicants and then sends lists (certifications) to Merit System hiring authorities when vacancies need to be filled. The staff created 245 lists (registers) with 5,587 applicants and issued 518 lists (certifications) to hiring authorities for 294 job classes and responded to requests for those lists an average of 43 minutes from November 1, 2008 to April 30, 2009. 551 applicants were hired in the reporting period.

The chart below provides a summary of monthly lists (certifications) sent to hiring authorities, the job classes associated with those lists, and the amount of time in minutes (Turnaround Time) the list was sent after it was requested.



## Future

The certification staff is currently integrating a process that was previously handled by two departments. As a result the staff will have better knowledge and understanding of the eligibility lists and the applicants. This will give the staff the ability to better serve both applicants and hiring authorities as well as reduce the time to create the lists. This change will also be beneficial to the recruiting staff in regard to developing and adjusting marketing strategies. This efficiency improvement is expected to be fully implemented by August 2009.

The current employment market has provided the recruiting staff with an unprecedented opportunity to enrich eligibility lists with qualified and diverse applicants. Since eligibility lists are maintained for approximately one year, these applicants will be used to fill Merit System vacancies for many months even as the employment market recovers.

Staffing

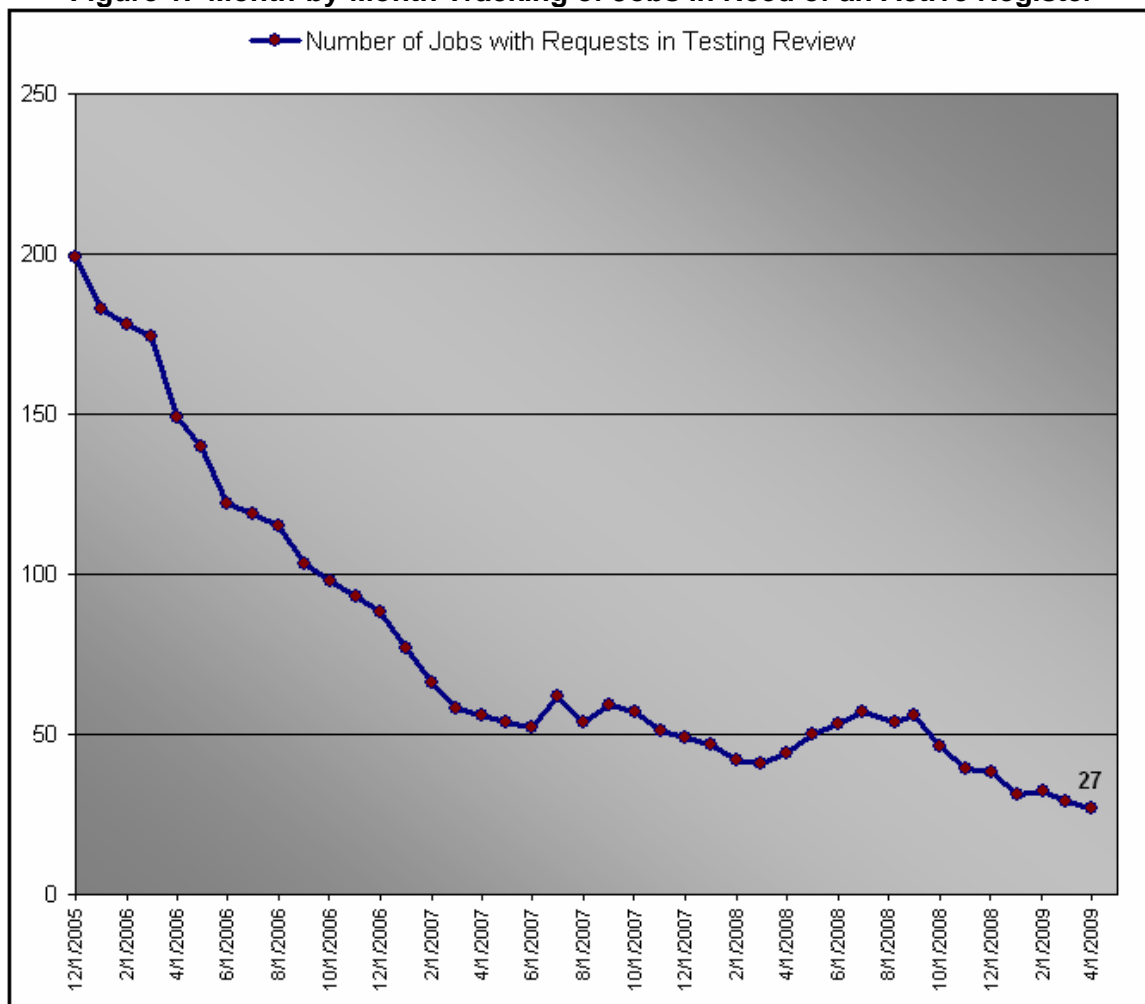
1	Manager
1	Administrative Specialist
1	Recruiting Advisors
2	Recruiting Representatives
4	Personnel Technicians
2	Administrative Assistants I

## Performance Measurement

Performance Measurement ensures that up-to-date registers of eligible applicants for employment are in place for all Merit System jobs. The Department is responsible for designing, implementing, and scoring all tests related to Merit System job classes, using job-related, highly valid, and legally defensible selection procedures.

During the period covered by the 2009 Semi-annual Report, the Performance Measurement Department achieved a 41% reduction in the number of jobs in need of eligible registers. As of this writing, there are 27 jobs in need of active registers, the lowest total in over six years. The inability of the Personnel Board to create registers in a timely manner using fair and non-discriminatory measures was at the heart of the Board's long-standing consent decree. These numbers represent a critical success metric for the Board. ( Figure 1).

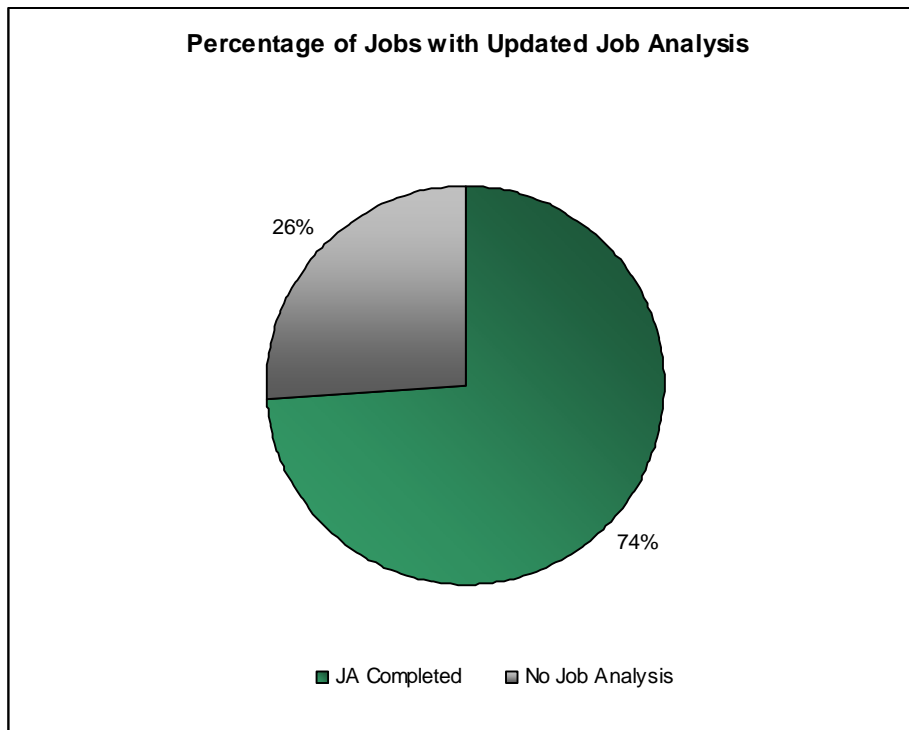
**Figure 1. Month-by-Month Tracking of Jobs in Need of an Active Register**



The Department performs thorough job analyses on Merit System jobs to ensure the validity and legal defensibility of selection procedures developed and used to make employment decisions. Having up-to-date job analyses for Merit System jobs ensures that selection tests can be

developed and registers established as quickly and efficiently as possible. In 2003, the PBJC had no jobs with properly conducted job analyses. As of today, 74% of the over 750 Merit System jobs have up-to-date job analyses (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Percentage of Merit System Job Classes with Up-to-Date Job Analyses**








During the report period, Performance Measurement administered 29 assessment centers/test administrations. For test security purposes and to increase the validity of assessment outcomes, the Board utilizes volunteer assessors from across the country. During this period, the Department recruited 147 such volunteers to donate approximately 40 hours each to serve as assessors for various selection procedures administered. This resulted in over 5500 hours of work time donated by public safety and personnel selection professionals to the Personnel Board of Jefferson County.

Release from the Board's consent decree has been the principle objective of the organization for the previous six years. This objective has been realized. The focus of the Board now has shifted to sustaining and building on the progress made. In January and February of 2009, the Department engaged in a thorough review and update of its Performance Measurement Procedure Manual. This manual documents the accepted professional practices and procedures that serve to guide the department's staff in the conduct of job analyses, the creation of testing instruments, and in the administration and evaluation of all examinations and assessments. The updates to the manual incorporated many new processes designed to enhance the efficiency and quality of the work performed by the Department and included revisions per an agreement made and entered into on November 7, 2008, among the Martin Plaintiffs and the Bryant Intervenors, the United States of America, and the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. On February 9-13, 2009, the Performance Measurement Department conducted training for all staff members from the Department on the updated Procedure Manual. Each staff member

participated in over 20 hours of training to ensure that all aspects of the updated manual were thoroughly covered.

### Professional Development

Performance Measurement places an emphasis on professional development and strives to be a leader among government agencies in staying abreast of, and contributing significantly to, the field of employee selection. A number of staff members from the Performance Measurement Division have been actively involved in conducting human resources related research for publication in scholarly journals and professional publications and presentation at professional conferences. The presentations and publications include:

	<p><b>Bellenger B. L. &amp; Crenshaw, J. L.</b> (2009). Examining racial bias in the assessment of employment interviews. <i>Presented at 24th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.</i></p>
	<p>Birkelbach, D. B., <b>Brink, K. E.</b> , Lance, C. E. (2009). Race bias in structured interview and assessment center ratings. <i>Presented at 24th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.</i></p>
	<p><b>Brink, K. E. &amp; Crenshaw, J. L.</b> (2009). Comparing black-white differences on video vs. audio structured situational interviews. <i>Presented at 24th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.</i></p>
	<p><b>Crenshaw, J. L.</b> (2009). Impact of range restriction corrections on structured interview group differences. <i>Presented at 24th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.</i></p>
	<p><b>Miller, M. E. &amp; Lange, S. L.</b> (2009). The relationship between seniority and test performance. <i>Presented at 24th Annual Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.</i></p>



During the period covered by this semi-annual report, three vacant staff positions have been filled.

**Dale Frey - Assessment & Development Specialist**

- Dale holds a B.A. in Psychology from Mansfield State University and an M.A. in from Montclair State University in Upper Montclair, New Jersey.
- Dale has worked as an Assessment Center Manager for Delta Airlines, Personnel Director for Lincoln Park Nursing Home in New Jersey, and Test & Measurement Specialist for the New York City Department of Personnel.

**Brian Swords - Assessment & Development Specialist**

- Brian received a B.A. in Psychology from the University of West Florida and a M.A. in Industrial & Organizational Psychology from East Carolina.
- Brian's work experience includes working as an Occupational Analysis Consultant with Workforce Dynamics and as a Graduate Assistant at East Carolina University.

**Karisa Morris - Assessment & Development Specialist**

- Karisa earned a B.A. in Psychology from Emory University, an M.B.A. in International Business from American Intercontinental University, and a M.A. in Industrial & Organizational Psychology from Florida Institute of Technology.
- Karisa has worked as a professor at Everest University and Brevard Community College and she has experience working with public safety testing with the Brevard Police Testing Center.

**Staffing**

3	I/O Psychologists
2	Senior Assessment and Development Specialists
18	Assessment and Development Specialists
1	Web Surveyor and Multi-Media Specialist
1	Data Management Technician
1	Administrative Assistant

**Future**

Seeking greater efficiencies in Board operations is a strategic imperative for the organization and the Performance Measurement Department is moving forward with an eye toward increased efficiency and quality of service. To create more efficient and effective recruiting, job announcement, and application screening processes, Performance Measurement is transitioning work involving job announcements and application screening to Workforce Development & Applicant Services (WDAS). This work is more closely aligned with recruiting activities. Approximately 75% of current job announcements and application screening is now being handled by WDAS. It is expected that 100% of announcement and screening activities will be transferred to WDAS by August, 2009. Additionally, the Performance Measurement Division is working with Classification & Compensation to identify ways to share needed information efficiently and effectively, as well as leverage the efforts of each department to reduce any redundancies in the areas processes. Finally, the Performance Measurement



Division continues to look at ways to improve the testing processes provided by the PBJC. Investigation of alternatives for integrating technology and improving data capturing and storage are currently underway.



## Training and Career Development

Training and Career Development provides opportunities for employees to develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge, and abilities through a wide array of course offerings. In all, the department offers forty-eight courses in both technical and non-technical fields from which employees may choose. Courses include communications, customer service, computer, diversity, ethics, legal, management, and supervision and are always free of charge to employees of the Merit System. We believe that when we invest in employees through training, not only does the system benefit by having a more productive workforce, but the employees themselves feel better about themselves and want to make a quality contribution in their public service roles. There is no doubt that a well trained and developed workforce is a valuable asset to both our member jurisdictions and to the public they serve.

The Department is particularly proud that in March 2009, Training Advisor Pete Blank was named one of the nations Top Young Trainers by Training Magazine.

## Leadership and Computer Skills Training

Between November 2008 and April 2009, 1,633 employees attended PBJC supervisory skills and computer skills training classes. Two of the newest offerings, Creating a Respectful Workplace and Disability Awareness Training, provided a new dimension to our diversity training efforts.

The Department's two certificate programs have been growing in popularity as participants have spread the word in their respective jurisdictions. To complete the Supervisory Certificate Program employees take twelve core courses and three electives. Participants may be supervisors or may be interested in moving into a supervisory track. Our next Supervisory Certificate Program graduation is scheduled for May 2009 with over fifty new graduates expected!

The Department's Computer Skills Certificate Program provides participants a foundation of basic computer skills and includes seven core courses and three electives. Information about the certificate programs and all of the Department's course offerings can be found on the Department's CareerZone website located at [www.pbjcal.org/cz/](http://www.pbjcal.org/cz/).

Leaders understand the importance of providing their employees with opportunities to grow. Leaders also recognize the importance of their own professional growth and development. The LEDGE program, **L**Eadership **D**evelopment for **G**overnment **E**xecutives, is again being offered to employees in leadership positions throughout the jurisdictions. This program targets executive level personnel and provides outstanding learning and networking opportunities to executives not otherwise available in the Merit System. One LEDGE session was held on-site at the Vestavia Hills Fire Department in December, where it was incorporated as part of the jurisdiction's officer development program. A second session was held in March. Twenty-three

public safety employees from police and fire departments attended, including chiefs from Birmingham, Leeds and Mountain Brook.

The Department recognizes that it is often difficult for employees to be away from their workplace for training and that at times jurisdictions see value in their employees training as a unit. To accommodate this, the Department provides classroom instruction on site where possible. Onsite training sessions were held at the Jefferson County Office of Workforce Development, the Trussville Fire Department, the City of Birmingham Planning Engineering and Permits Department, and the City of Birmingham Police Department.

## **Technology Advancements**

People learn differently. Some prefer instructor-led classroom training. Others do well learning on their own and at their own pace. And, busy schedules and shift work preclude some employees from attending instructor-led training altogether. To address the various needs of learners, the Department is adding e-learning (computer-based training) to its curriculum. Computer-based training incorporates video and interactive learning opportunities as a means of more actively engaging learners in the process. The first e-learning course, Customer Service Basics, is scheduled for release in late summer of 2009.

CareerZone, the Department's in-house learning management and registration system, has been updated with new features such as manager notification, electronic evaluations, and video capability. CareerZone has also been modified to give jurisdictions the ability to use the site to manage their own in-service training and to track training taken by their employees, whether through courses taught at the Personnel Board or training taken elsewhere.

## **Staffing**

2      Training Advisors

## Classification and Compensation

Classification and Compensation is responsible for classifying all Merit System jobs, assuring that employees are properly assigned to classifications, and that classifications are appropriately assigned to salary grades. The Department reviews position description questionnaires, conducts job audits, develops classification specifications, and collects and analyzes labor market data to assure the competitive positioning of Merit System jobs. It is the objective of the Department to create and maintain a compensation and classification system that fosters career growth and is both externally competitive with regard to relevant labor markets and is equitable internally.

### Activities

A major activity of Classification and Compensation is the conduct of the Annual Classification Survey. Mandated by statute, the Survey is designed to assure that employees are assigned to proper job classes. Each full-time position in the System is surveyed at least once in a five year period. Six hundred thirty-eight (638) employees participated in the 2008-2009 Survey. What was once a labor and paper intensive process, is now accomplished completely through web interface. Position Description Questionnaires are submitted online and all communications regarding outcomes are accomplished through the Board's Interactive Voice Response System and MyMeritMatters, a website designed exclusively for Merit System employees.

		2008-2009			
Job-Class	Description	# C1 Emp	% Of C1 Emp	# Of Job Codes	% Of Job Codes
070	Nursing Services	367	4.46%	46	4.71%
071	Laboratory/Hospital Technical	39	0.47%	20	2.05%
072	Physical/Occupational Therapy	16	0.19%	7	0.72%
073	Environmental Health	96	1.17%	21	2.15%
074	Dental Services	29	0.35%	8	0.82%
075	Mental Health	3	0.04%	6	0.61%
076	Public Health Administration	41	0.50%	29	2.97%
077	Nutrition Services	12	0.15%	5	0.51%
078	Hospital Administration	8	0.10%	15	1.54%
079	Pharmaceutical	34	0.41%	8	0.82%
083	Wastewater Treatment	190	2.31%	14	1.43%
085	Skilled Trades	89	1.08%	11	1.13%
086	Building Maintenance	126	1.53%	21	2.15%
087	Street and Sanitation Admin	28	0.34%	14	1.43%
088	Misc Const/Maint/Oper	2	0.02%	4	0.41%
091	Housekeeping	82	1.00%	13	1.33%

This year's Survey concludes on June 9<sup>th</sup>.

Providing useful information to jurisdictions to help them manage their employees better is an important focus of the Board. In November of 2008, a report detailing employees receiving premium pay was sent to each Appointing Authority, Human Resources Departments and Payroll Coordinators for their review and comments. Premiums are an important part of the Merit System Pay Plan. The report allows each jurisdiction to validate employee's receipt of

premiums against their own records and to assure that the continuing receipt of premiums is appropriate.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b># of Emps Receiving Premiums</b>
Jefferson County	528
Bessemer	127
Birmingham	714
Fairfield	23
Fultondale	13
Gardendale	30
Homewood	105
Hueytown	47
Midfield	15
Mountain Brook	87
Personnel Board of Jeff Co	5
Pleasant Grove	17
Tarrant City	30
Vestavia Hills	116
Irondale	41
Trussville	39
Warrior	5
Leeds	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1965</b>

Of the total 1,965 employees receiving premium pay, 8% receive the maximum of three premiums or fifteen percent, 49% receive two premiums or ten percent and 43% receive one premium or five percent above their regular rate of pay.

To assure that individuals working in the unclassified service are not performing duties that more appropriately should be classified, the Board routinely audits unclassified employees of member jurisdictions. The staff of Classification and Compensation, working with staff from Performance Measurement, conduct interviews and make classification recommendations. Currently, Board staff are completing interviews with City of Birmingham laborers totaling some 582 individuals.

To assure that work is not being performed by non-classified individuals that should more appropriately be performed within the Merit System, the Board is also statutorily mandated, with some exceptions, to review contracts for services let by member jurisdictions. During the report period, there were 11 contracts submitted and reviewed with nine approvals, one denial, and one pending decision. In March, the Board issued a Show Cause notice to the City of Birmingham related to a contract with Judicial Court Services, Inc. A hearing is scheduled for May 12, 2009.

**Staffing**

- 1     Manager
- 2     Compensation Advisors

## EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Employee Relations Department provides information and assistance related to the Rules and Regulations, operating policies and procedures, the Enabling Act, and other state and federal laws that impact the Personnel Board and Merit System. Procedurally, the Department processes suspensions, dismissals, reprimands, requests for administrative leave, requests for paid injury leave, and grievances.



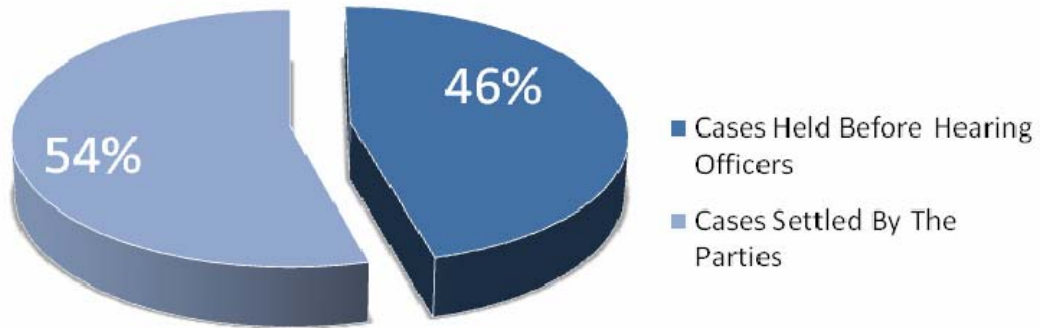
As Jefferson County municipalities seek new ways to address the current economic challenges and meet the needs of their constituencies, concern and uncertainty are common themes among the ranks of employees in the County. While misunderstandings and conflicts in the workplace are inevitable to some degree, the Employee Relations team is developing proactive steps to avoid or mitigate the escalation of workplace issues through open communications with appointing authorities, supervisors, and employees.

The goal of the Employee Relations (ER) team is to ensure that employee relations issues are handled in an effective, expedient and competent manner in order to improve workplace productivity and morale. The ER staff is available to meet and assist the employees of the Merit System with challenging issues. When assistance is requested, we provide honest feedback to help employees and managers make informed decisions about available options. Our position on matters that come before us is neutral. Our commitment is to treat all issues with the greatest discretion and respect, and to maintain appropriate confidentiality. Our vision is to help employees and managers achieve a win-win outcome and enhance their working relationships.

One of the approaches utilized by Employee Relations is the Pre-Hearing Conference. The Pre-Hearing Conference allows the ER staff to meet jointly with the parties and their representatives. The intent of the Pre-hearing Conference is to encourage open dialog, to clarify the substantive issues, and hopefully to arrive at a satisfactory agreement between the parties prior to the formal hearing.

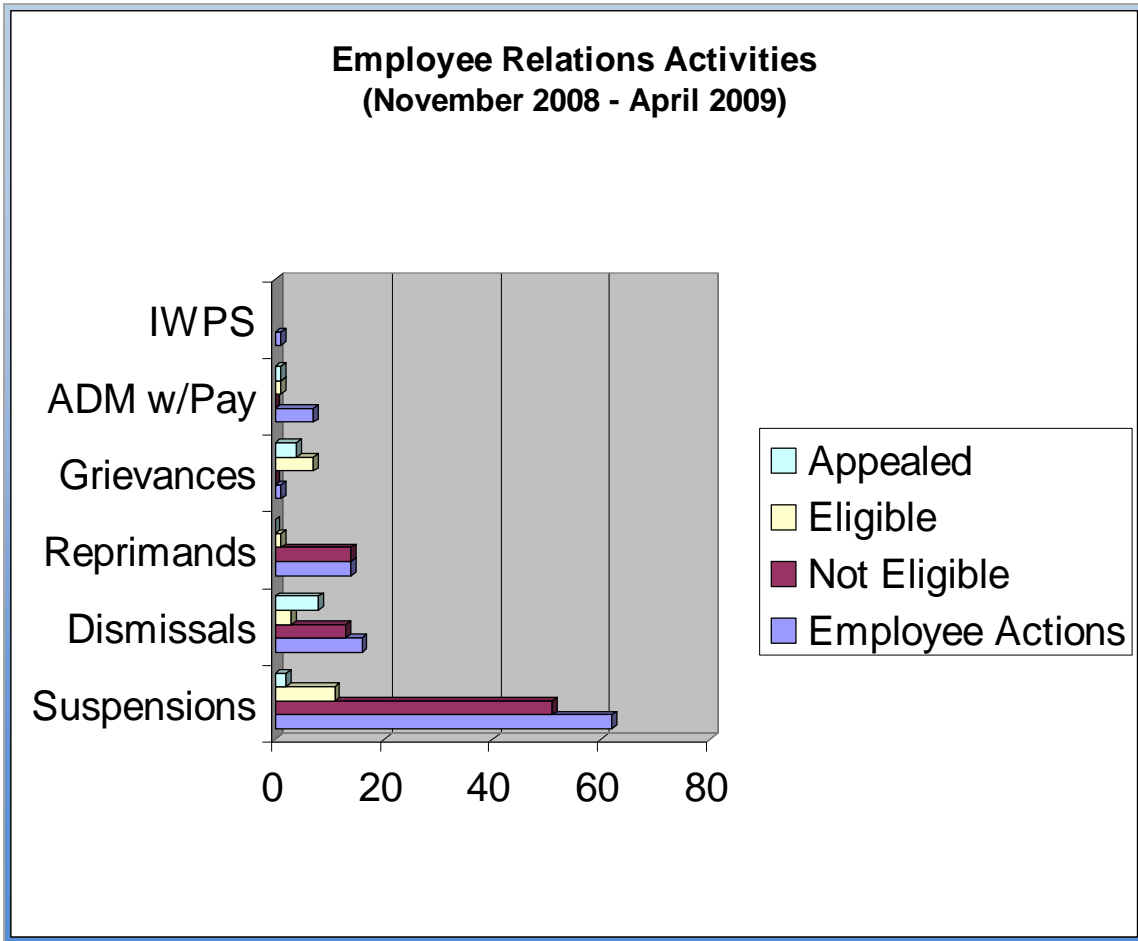
The chart on the following page reflects the success rate for pre-hearing settlements.

### Cases Held Before Hearing Officers vs. Cases Settled By The Parties



### Activities and Accomplishments

For the first six months of fiscal year, the Employee Relations Department received notification of one hundred one (101) employee actions (grievances, disciplinary appeals, etc.). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the actions received were not eligible for appeal in accordance with PBJC Rules and Regulations. Thirty-three percent (33%) were eligible. Of the 33% that were eligible, only forty-five percent (45%) resulted in actual cases being filed.



## Scanning Project

Currently, the ER Department is electronically scanning all past documents for disciplinary cases into the “Image Now” system. This initiative will alleviate the process of checking physical forms and makes it faster and more efficient for the ER Department to respond to inquiries on disciplinary information for internal departments, Appointing Authorities and Merit employees.

## Future

The Employee Relations Department is striving for greater accessibility in assisting the community-at-large, employees, attorneys and management alike. ER is taking steps to incorporate a specific email address ([er@pbjcal.org](mailto:er@pbjcal.org)) along with a website ([www.pbjcal.org/er](http://www.pbjcal.org/er)) into its daily activities. The ER email address will allow the department to receive forms electronically as an alternative to the U.S. Mail and place emphasis on the time required to process documents.



The new email address is available to receive questions that may aid in resolving conflict prior to possible disciplinary action or the filing of a complaint/grievance. A response is guaranteed within 24 hours during a normal work week.

Additionally, the Employee Relations Department plans to host ongoing “Meet and Greet” informational sessions aimed at discussing general to specific topics of interest regarding the Merit System and its relationship to the Personnel Board Employee Relations Department. Visit our website for additional information regarding the “Meet and Greet” sessions.



Staffing

- 1 Employee Relations Team Lead
- 1 Employee Relations Advisor
- 1 Personnel Technician
- 1 Administrative Assistant II

Employee Relations Department reports to the General Counsel who is supported by a Paralegal.



## **Information Technology**

### **Systems Support**

### **Data Management**

### **Records Management**

The Information Technology Department provides the maintenance and support for the information network and data reporting and analysis needs of the Personnel Board and provides technical assistance to the jurisdictions using the Board's online information systems. The rapid pace of technological innovation has allowed IT to serve as a key facilitator of change at the Board. The implementation of the Board's Human Resource Information Management System (HRIMS) in 2004 marked the beginning of a dynamic process that continues to impact the agency in many positive ways.

The highly integrated nature of the HRIMS with its enhanced capability for analytics allows the Board to measure, analyze, and optimize its internal business practices. Work requests are electronically tracked and time stamped at every stage of processing giving management the ability to view, from their desktops, where work is in progress at any point in time. Online analytics reflect processing times and variances that alert management to problems in work production and assist management in identifying operational efficiencies that can be gained through process improvement.

### **Projects**

The Department is currently engaged in a required version upgrade of its Lawson System (one of the systems that comprise the HRIMS), scheduled to be completed no later than August, 2009. The new version of the software will improve end-user processing speed, provides more flexibility in assigning security roles, and is more intuitive from an end-user perspective. The software's reporting capability is also enhanced.

Assuring that candidates whose names appear on registers continue to be interested in employment in the Merit System has been a perennial concern of the Board. At the same time, contacting thousands of candidates to assess their continued interest has been prohibitively time and labor intensive. To address this need, the IT Department implemented an automated outbound dialing system in April of this year. Candidates are contacted telephonically, by text message, and/or by email. Replies are automated and the names of candidates responding that they are no longer interested or available are automatically removed from the register.

The IT Department has been integrally involved since December in a massive project with the City of Birmingham to eliminate the City's substantial backlog of personnel actions. The City is making progress and has met the second of three deadlines imposed on it by the District Court. The third is scheduled to be completed by the end of February, 2010, and proves to be somewhat more challenging. There will continue to be a substantial backlog after February, 2010, but the remaining actions should be measurably easier for the City to process.

The Personnel Board is required by statute to certify the bi-weekly payrolls of its member jurisdictions. During the certification process, the Board compares employees' base pay to approved rates of pay as reflected in Board records. The Merit System has become exponentially more complex since 1935 when the legislature contemplated the certification of payrolls for only three jurisdictions. The Board now must certify the payrolls for twenty-three jurisdictions issuing pay from thirty-nine salary schedules. In January, the Board began certifying the payrolls of jurisdictions quarterly. Previously, the Board had attempted to certify every bi-weekly payroll issued by the jurisdictions, an extremely time and labor intensive process for both the jurisdictions and the Board.

The relational database design of the Board's Human Resource Information Management System provides powerful reporting capabilities not previously available through the legacy system. And, the system's web accessibility puts real-time information on the desktop of managers in every jurisdiction served by the Board. To facilitate decision making in the organization, the Board is leveraging this enhanced capability to create a robust reporting infrastructure that makes information available to jurisdictions on demand. On the drawing board for 2009, is the development of a web accessible Business Center that will provide approved jurisdiction personnel the ability to retrieve management reports from a reports library, create customized reports and obtain other information contained in Board records specific only to the requesting jurisdiction.

#### Staffing

1	Manager/Network Administrator
1	Systems Administrator
1	Business Systems Analyst
1	Systems Analyst
1	Webmaster
1	PC Technician Intern
2	Data Management Specialists
2	Data Management Technicians
4	Records Management Specialists

These sites are maintained by the IT Department. Statistical data is captured that reflects a range on information regarding traffic to and within each site. The graph that follows tracks the number of monthly visits to each site.

[www.pbjcal.org](http://www.pbjcal.org)

[www.jobsquest.org](http://www.jobsquest.org)

[www.meritmatters.org](http://www.meritmatters.org)

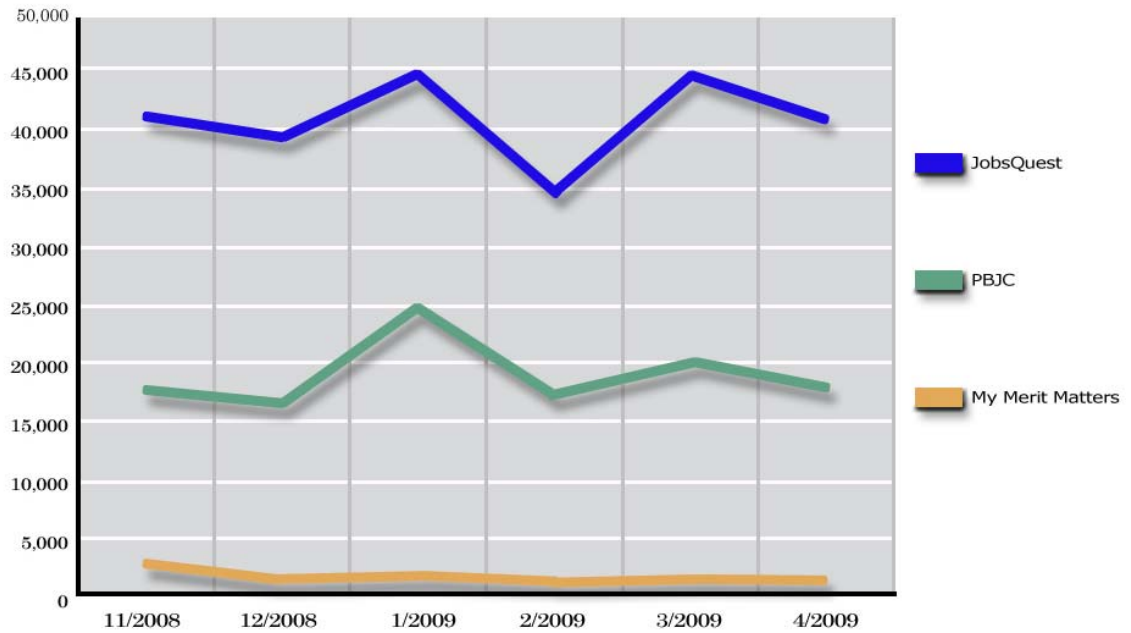
[www.careerzone.org](http://www.careerzone.org)

PBJC Main Site

Employment Site

Merit System Employee Site (Password Restricted)

Training and Registration Site (Password Restricted)



## Community Involvement

The Board encourages its employees to participate in community outreach programs, and civic and professional organizations in order to build strong bonds of friendship and caring relationships within the community. The following are only representative of the many activities in which our staff are engaged. They are far too numerous to list here. The Personnel Board of Jefferson County benefits from its employees' involvement in community and professional affairs through the increased awareness of its presence and mission in the county.

In December, 2008, the Performance Measurement staff volunteered their time to assist with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. The staff organized and delivered toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the metropolitan Birmingham area.

The Performance Measurement staff continues to bring national recognition to the Board. Once known for its inability to develop and administer tests that comport with federal law, the Board has become as a role model in the I/O community. Jeff Crenshaw, Brian Bellenger, Stacey Lange, Libby Miller, and Ashanti Edwards, presented research papers at the 2009 Annual Conference of the Society of Industrial Organizational Psychologists.

Pete Blank, Training Advisor, became President-Elect of the American Society for Training and Development.

Roger McCullough, Manager, HR Information and Technology Services and Guy Dewees, Manager of Workforce Development and Applicant Services serve as President and Vice President respectively of the Alabama Business Leadership Employment Network, a consortium of businesses in Alabama dedicated to the hiring and promotion of people with disabilities. Mr. McCullough also serves on the Board of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services representing business and industry in the state's Region Six.

Kim Kinder, Manager of Classification and Compensation, serves on the Community Resources Committee of the Society of Human Resource Managers and is engaged in an initiative to provide resources to unemployed job seekers through professional networking opportunities and career and job search training. Ms. Kinder is a past president of SHRM.

Carlos Kyle , Employee Relations Team Lead, is Founder and President of ALIVE (Abundant Life through Innovation, Vision, and Enrichment), a community development corporation established to operate and maintain enrichment centers. ALIVE is committed to excellence by educating, equipping, and encouraging all persons to be leaders that value a wholesome quality of life.

Raymond Goolsby currently serves as President of the American Society of Public Administration, Birmingham Chapter. Mr. Goolsby also serves a President of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, MPA Alumni Association and is Co-Founder of PROPEL, a local youth mentoring organization.

Kemi Niyiladipo raised over \$600 for the 2009 March of Dimes WalkAmerica campaign.

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, Josh Gilliam and Raymond Goolsby participated in the Easter Seals Golf Tournament representing the Personnel Board.

Other activities in which Board members actively participate include the United Way of Greater Birmingham, the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, and the Better Basics Literacy Program.