

Dan Hoffman (00:00):

Hello, and welcome to part two of the Rouss Review City Works. So we're about to interview Katlynn Slonaker. She is a Winchester Police Department Officer. She's in charge of recruitment. She's gonna walk through the process. If you've ever thought about being a police officer or what goes into the training of a police officer this interview is gonna be for you. So, without any further ado, let's bring her on in. <Upbeat music>.

Dan Hoffman (00:28):

All right. So here we go. Katlynn Slonaker. I always wanna call you Sponaker. I don't know why. I don't know why that rolls off my tongue easier than Slonaker. Yeah, but it's Katlynn Slonaker.

Katlynn Slonaker (00:45):

Slonaker.

Dan Hoffman (00:46):

See, I wasn't even doing right when I thought I was doing it right. Slonaker. Well, I called you Slonaker for a year now, so,

Katlynn Slonaker (00:52):

It's okay.

Dan Hoffman (00:53):

I'm going to get it right.

Katlynn Slonaker (00:55):

It's better than some of the names I've been called, so it's good.

Dan Hoffman (00:57):

Katlynn. Your first name's Katlynn, right? I've gotten that right?

Katlynn Slonaker (01:01):

Yes.

Katlynn Slonaker (01:01):

Oh, okay.

Katlynn Slonaker (01:01):

It's actually Catlynn, but that's okay.

Dan Hoffman (01:03):

Are you...? <Laugh> What?

Katlynn Slonaker (01:05):

No, it's Katlynn. <Laugh>.

Dan Hoffman ([01:07](#)):

It's Caitlin. Okay.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:08](#)):

It is Caitlin. You were right.

Dan Hoffman ([01:09](#)):

All right. Right. So, we have Catlynn Slonaker here with us.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:13](#)):

<Laugh>.

Dan Hoffman ([01:16](#)):

Katlynn. You are a police officer with the Winchester Police Department.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:19](#)):

I am.

Dan Hoffman ([01:20](#)):

What is your rank?

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:22](#)):

Police Officer IV.

Dan Hoffman ([01:22](#)):

Police Officer IV. What does that mean?

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:24](#)):

It just means that I've put in...

Dan Hoffman ([01:26](#)):

You're the fourth police officer we hired?

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:28](#)):

<Laugh> No. No, that would be awesome. I'd be really old if that were the case. I don't even think they're alive now. It just means that I have put in six years in order to be a Police Officer IV. I will actually have eight years in next month.

Dan Hoffman ([01:44](#)):

Oh, wow. So you've gone from 1, 2, 3, now, 4.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:47](#)):

Yep.

Dan Hoffman ([01:48](#)):

And what what's above after four?

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:49](#)):

Corporal.

Dan Hoffman ([01:49](#)):

Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:53](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([01:54](#)):

And then from Lieutenant to...

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:56](#)):

Captain.

Dan Hoffman ([01:56](#)):

Captain to Deputy Chief.

Katlynn Slonaker ([01:59](#)):

Yes. And then Chief.

Dan Hoffman ([02:01](#)):

And then Chief. So, for those of you not aware, Katlynn, she is one of my police officers here in the City of Winchester. We're gonna chat a little bit about becoming a police officer now. Obviously, that is a very different thing than it was 20 years ago. I'd say even 10 years ago. It has evolved a significant amount, obviously. Things in the world are changing. Obviously, we as society are coming to realize a lot of things. And so, the day to day experience of a police officer is very different than it was maybe 10, 20 years ago. And that's a good thing. But it definitely has changed the way people look at the profession and the way people have approached the profession especially those people who might be interested in becoming a police officer. It's getting harder. It's harder and harder for us to recruit police officers for a lot of reasons. We're not getting into those today. Today, we're gonna talk about what it means to become a police officer. So, Katlynn, you're in charge of recruitment.

Katlynn Slonaker ([03:19](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([03:19](#)):

Over at the police department. When you have somebody that comes to you, let's say it's somebody just outta high school, 18, 19. Maybe they're taking some community college classes. They're not quite sure where they're gonna go with it. Maybe they've graduated college, got a criminal justice degree. Who knows? What are you looking for if they were to approach you and say, 'Hey, I'm thinking about being a police officer.' What are you looking for in that conversation?

Katlynn Slonaker (03:45):

Well, first of all, visual cues. Do they take care of themselves? Or how do they hold themselves? Are they standing up straight? Are they looking me in the eyes? Are they using their hands a lot? Are they dressed? I've had people come in and they're...

Dan Hoffman (04:01):

They come in completely undressed. Wow. That's a bad start to an interview.

Katlynn Slonaker (04:03):

No. <Laugh> You know, I've had someone come literally off the street into the police department and say, 'I wanna be a police officer. What do I have to do?' And they were literally in holy, baggy shorts. A shirt that had paint stains all over it. And it was a cutoff. Their sneakers weren't even tied. And they're like, 'I wanna be a police officer.' And I'm like, 'All right.' I mean, first impressions. Right? You have that with any job. I'm looking at them and I'm thinking, 'Okay, so maybe they're having a bad day.' He literally came in off the street and said he wanted to be a police officer. I sat down, I talked to him. I mean, visual is a part of it. And then, how they speak? What do they have to offer whenever they do speak?

Dan Hoffman (04:39):

It's professionalism. It speaks to their ability to communicate.

Katlynn Slonaker (04:42):

Yes, of course. Now, if I talk to someone and they're constantly looking down and they're looking at the floor, they won't even make eye contact with me, that's a big thing, you know? Are they not even confident enough to talk to another person? I know they're probably nervous to talk to me because they want a job. But, when you go on the street, you're gonna have to make eye contact with people. It's officer presence.

Dan Hoffman (05:01):

So, if you ask that person: 'Why do you wanna be a police officer?' What kind of answer are you looking for?

Katlynn Slonaker (05:07):

The most generic answer we get is: 'I wanna help people.'

Dan Hoffman (05:11):

Yeah. That's not why.

Katlynn Slonaker (05:14):

That's not what we wanna hear. There's gotta be more of it.

Dan Hoffman ([05:15](#)):

That's that's gotta be part it.

Katlynn Slonaker ([05:17](#)):

Yeah, of course. But I wanna hear the underlying portion of it. Like you wanna do something greater than yourself. That's what you're gonna do whenever you become a police officer. Something bigger, greater than yourself. You grew up in a neighborhood or a family where there was a lot of police interaction and it was in a negative way and you wanna come up and you want to show them that it can be a positive. You wanna get out to that community and give back to that specific part of the community and say, 'I can be a cop and I can do what another cop didn't do.' Or maybe you had positive interactions with the police as a child. And you wanna do the same thing. You wanna give back essentially to your community.

Dan Hoffman ([05:56](#)):

Okay. So, they've made it through that first kind of interaction. Now, granted that first conversation with you, that's not a make or break.

Katlynn Slonaker ([06:04](#)):

No.

Dan Hoffman ([06:04](#)):

They're welcome to apply, even if they show up in flip flops.

Katlynn Slonaker ([06:08](#)):

Yes! I encourage them.

Dan Hoffman ([06:08](#)):

You'd still encourage them to apply. What happens? It's not like, 'Hey, I'm gonna go get a job at the grocery store bagging groceries, where I go fill out a form and I start the next day.' What does the application process look like?

Katlynn Slonaker ([06:24](#)):

First of all, the application. Anytime I talk to someone before they apply, I make sure that I tell them to take the time in applying. Make sure that you're filling out the questions correctly. Make sure that if you don't know the answer to it, you are texting me. You're emailing me. I give them that. I say my information's on the page or I say, 'Hey, here's my work cell.' I always have it on me. Shoot me a text and say, 'Hey, I'm not really sure how to answer this question.' And a lot of people do, they end up texting me saying, 'I'm not really sure what you're asking on this, or I don't have a specific date for whatever the question's asking, what should I put down?' And then I'll guide 'em on that. So, I always recommend take your time on the application. It is almost 400 questions long.

Dan Hoffman ([07:06](#)):

Oh wow.

Katlynn Slonaker (07:06):

Some of them may not apply to you at all. Especially for people who have never been in the military. And some of them are...

Dan Hoffman (07:12):

Four hundred questions. What do you ask 'em all the state capitals?

Katlynn Slonaker (07:15):

<Laughs>

Dan Hoffman (07:15):

Like, what kinda questions are you asking in this thing?

Katlynn Slonaker (07:17):

High school. What other levels of education they've received? Some people go to multiple colleges. Some people start a college at NoVA and then they don't finish or they do get their associates and then they progress onto a university and then they get another four year degree. There's spots for that. A lot of things may not apply or military, there's 12 questions or so related to military alone. So they could skip those questions, too. Traffic.

Dan Hoffman (07:45):

I'm sure you ask about criminal background.

Katlynn Slonaker (07:47):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman (07:48):

What's generally disqualifying?

Katlynn Slonaker (07:51):

Felonies. Depending on the felony. I mean, everything is taken on a case by case basis for the most part, but felonies. Those are kind of a big one. Domestic violence. If you've been convicted of a domestic assault, traffic offenses. If you've had a DUI within the last three years you cannot apply. Drug use is the one thing that has changed for us. It used to be, prior to the legal changes, if you use marijuana within the last two years prior to your application, then you could not apply within that two years. If it's been two years, you're perfect. Didn't really matter about the amount, although it was taken into consideration. Now, you can use up to the time that you apply, and then we take the amount, usage, occurrence, all of that into consideration when looking at your application. The automatic disqualifiers, though: LSD, hallucinogenic, heroin, PCP. And then using cocaine after the age of 21. If you've used several times, then you're out.

Dan Hoffman (08:54):

Got it. Okay. So they've answered all 400 questions, and of course, I'm assuming lying about any of those things is an automatic disqualifier.

New Speaker ([09:05](#)):

Yes. Which we usually find out later on in the process.

Dan Hoffman ([09:07](#)):

So, all 400 questions have been answered. They've answered them properly and accurately and honestly. Then what happens? Is it kind of more of a if yes, then go kind of situation or is there a review panel of folks that are looking at the app, those questions and answers themselves? What happens when you actually get the application?

Katlynn Slonaker ([09:34](#)):

The application is submitted to HR. HR then sends it over to me. I literally review every single application for animal control officer, police officer, Virginia certified officer. As long as I'm in the office and I'm working and I'm not on vacation, I'm reviewing those applications. I'm making sure that what they are saying is at least presented in the way that we're hoping is honest, integrity is used. And if they meet that criteria, then they're passed on and they're invited for a physical fitness assessment.

Dan Hoffman ([10:02](#)):

What's in the physical fitness assessment? Jumping jacks?

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:05](#)):

That would be really easy.

Dan Hoffman ([10:08](#)):

That would be easy. Well, jumping jacks for some people ain't easy.

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:11](#)):

<Laugh> Yeah. You're right.

Dan Hoffman ([10:12](#)):

We're changing some of that, too.

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:14](#)):

We are. Yes. I do look forward to those changes.

Dan Hoffman ([10:17](#)):

You're not gonna do a lot of bench presses in the normal line of duty.

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:21](#)):

No. Or pushups. No, unless you're trying to show up someone on your squad. No. So, right now, the testing, you get invited for that testing. You RSVP, first of all. You have to go back onto the website, RSVP that you're gonna show up. With that time that we gave with the location, you come in, we have

you sign a release, have you sign a waiver, get your blood pressure, make sure you're good to go on your heart rate. And then you do a bench press, vertical jump, pushups, sit ups, 300 meter sprint, and then, a mile and a half run.

Dan Hoffman ([10:55](#)):

Now, the run I get.

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:57](#)):

Which run?

Dan Hoffman ([10:58](#)):

The sprint and the run, I get that.

Katlynn Slonaker ([10:59](#)):

Why?

Dan Hoffman ([11:00](#)):

Because you might have to chase somebody.

Katlynn Slonaker ([11:01](#)):

Right. Endurance. Right.

Dan Hoffman ([11:02](#)):

That makes sense. The bench press seems a little, but I guess you need to be able to show that you can push something. So, I could understand that.

Katlynn Slonaker ([11:13](#)):

It's 71% of your body weight. Where we find is a lot of females cannot do that, which is why we're trying to revamp the testing now.

Dan Hoffman ([11:21](#)):

Okay, so this is the old testing.

Katlynn Slonaker ([11:23](#)):

Yes. We are still using it at this time until we come up with a new one. There's a long process that has to be done in order for us to change. This process that we have now was approved, studies were done, lots of seals of approval. So, no one can come back and sue us for anything. It takes a lot to change it to something else. But we are finding now that females, specifically for the bench press or the pushups, just cannot simply do them. They don't have that upper body strength.

Dan Hoffman ([11:53](#)):

How many pushups can you do?

Katlynn Slonaker ([11:54](#)):

Me? I don't know. Why are you asking me that now you're putting me on the spot?

Dan Hoffman ([11:57](#)):

Didn't you get didn't you have to go through the test.

Katlynn Slonaker ([11:59](#)):

I did.

Dan Hoffman ([12:00](#)):

Well, clearly you could do enough.

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:02](#)):

Well, yeah. For the City of Winchester, for our police department, you actually have to do it annually.

Dan Hoffman ([12:06](#)):

Oh really?

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:07](#)):

So you're not just a one and done.

Dan Hoffman ([12:08](#)):

You did some recently.

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:09](#)):

Well, because we're changing our testing, we kind of stopped that for the year.

Dan Hoffman ([12:16](#)):

Okay.

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:16](#)):

For this last year we didn't. The typical is 19 in a minute. However, if you're a police officer, there are cut points. It's based on your sex and your age. For me, I think I had to do, I don't know, 25 for something more to get a cut point, a highest cut point. Which would enable me to have eight hours of leave, which was really nice. It's basically the City giving us money. The Department is, so it's very nice, and I'm very grateful for that.

Dan Hoffman ([12:45](#)):

You're welcome.

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:46](#)):

Yeah. <Laugh> Thank you. But for the standard, it's just 19. I can tell you I've probably done 24, 25 in a minute.

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Dan Hoffman ([12:54](#)):

Well, when we wrap up, we'll see.

Katlynn Slonaker ([12:56](#)):

How about we take a picture afterwards to show my guns versus your guns?

Dan Hoffman ([12:59](#)):

Sure. That's fine.

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:00](#)):

I'm sure that I would win. <Laugh>

Dan Hoffman ([13:02](#)):

<Laugh> You... All right.

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:04](#)):

Oh, confidence. <Laugh>

Dan Hoffman ([13:05](#)):

So, okay. You've reviewed the application. Seems like a good candidate. They can do all the fitness stuff. What happens next?

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:16](#)):

The same day as the fitness exam is the written exam.

Dan Hoffman ([13:20](#)):

Do they have to write an essay?

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:20](#)):

Kind of. I think that would be almost better.

Dan Hoffman ([13:25](#)):

Here's what I did this summer.

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:26](#)):

Yes. Or why do I wanna be a police officer, which is what I had to do whenever I applied.

Dan Hoffman ([13:31](#)):

Is there an answer in that essay you're writing? Is there an answer that you're looking for or is it just to make sure you are literate?

Katlynn Slonaker ([13:41](#)):

That's probably what they were looking for. Sentence structure and that's what we're doing now for the written. So they physically have a booklet, they watch an old video from the 1980s or 1990s. It is awesome. It's of a scenario, whichever scenario I picked that day. It could be a bar scene. It could be car accident and they have to physically write a report, like a police report.

Dan Hoffman ([13:59](#)):

Oh, okay. That makes a lot of sense.

Katlynn Slonaker ([14:00](#)):

Yes. That way we're checking: Can they spell? How good is their penmanship? Even though most reports are written, you're typing them on the computer anyways. Do they have sentence structure? How is their grammar? How is their punctuation? That sort of thing. That's what we're really looking for.

Dan Hoffman ([14:16](#)):

Penmanship. Really?

Katlynn Slonaker ([14:18](#)):

I mean, yeah. Cause you still have to fill out paperwork here. Not everything's online. You still have to be able to write. You have to be able to read it.

Dan Hoffman ([14:26](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean legible that's fine.

Katlynn Slonaker ([14:29](#)):

If they can't spell, though, I mean...

Dan Hoffman ([14:32](#)):

Spelling, of course. You gotta be able to spell.

Katlynn Slonaker ([14:37](#)):

Well, most people can't spell Sergeant or Lieutenant or harassment or trespass.

Dan Hoffman ([14:41](#)):

Harassment's not ban. Trespass is easy. Sergeant, I could see getting the A's and E's mixed up. Lieutenant, little bit of dyslexia might be difficult there. Okay. So they've taken the written exam. Then what? When do they get the polygraph?

Katlynn Slonaker ([15:01](#)):

That would be after interview.

Dan Hoffman ([15:04](#)):

So written exam, you read the written exam.

Katlynn Slonaker ([15:07](#)):

I do. I check off on them. I make notes on them. What can kind of...some of them I've written like elementary level writing. They might need to get to maybe a little bit of a basic college level. Or I've written, 'Hey, they have awesome sentence structure. They have grammar. They know how to use punctuation.' That sort of thing. I'll make notes on it. So afterwards, I make a list and we set up interviews. If you've passed the physical, and most people do okay on the written, we're still gonna take you most likely, unless you really can't write. I set up a list, and then they can pick a time for a certain date that I pick out for them to come in for an interview. Typically, within two weeks. I know everybody works. Hopefully, they're working. That way they can give their employer ample time. And then there are some cases where people are like, 'that's a day that I'm working. I definitely can't come. I can't take off.' Then, I will say, 'okay, well then let's work around it.' I don't wanna miss a good opportunity just because they can't miss work. So they're scheduled to come in and they have a panel interview.

Dan Hoffman ([16:11](#)):

They're holding up their commitments to their current job.

Katlynn Slonaker ([16:14](#)):

No, I'm happy about that. It shows professionalism.

Dan Hoffman ([16:17](#)):

Exactly. So who's in the interview?

Katlynn Slonaker ([16:19](#)):

I usually use three people in the department. I try to use the rank of Sergeant. I have used detectives, lieutenants. I don't typically use captains, but I may have to. And I really like pulling police officers. I've had the Drug Task Force officers sometimes come in. Their detectives. I have had patrol sergeants come in, and then, just regular police officers because they're gonna be working with them, too. I like to have a good group of people of three. I have to have an odd number.

Dan Hoffman ([16:56](#)):

Gotcha. So written, then interview, then polygraph.

Katlynn Slonaker ([17:01](#)):

Yes. So in the interview they're graded. I'm sorry, rated one through four. Four being or five rather being the best. Let's get them going. They were awesome. They came him in a suit. They were early. They presented themselves well. They were able to answer the questions.

Dan Hoffman ([17:17](#)):

All the typical job interview stuff.

Katlynn Slonaker ([17:19](#)):

Yes. Well, I mean, our questions are not typical, but I'm not gonna give those to you.

Dan Hoffman ([17:23](#)):

Of course, but there are some things that really translate to any job.

Katlynn Slonaker ([17:27](#)):

Yes. They're graded, and then, I put them in a top score of five through three. Twos and ones do not move on. Threes are, we're gonna hold them, and then, we're gonna work through the fives and the fours first. And then, they're sent immediately to polygraph.

Dan Hoffman ([17:45](#)):

Yes. What happens in the polygraph?

Katlynn Slonaker ([17:47](#)):

You sit down with a very strange person and you stare at them in the room and they ask you questions.

Dan Hoffman ([17:52](#)):

So it's very similar to this, then.

Katlynn Slonaker ([17:54](#)):

Yeah. <Laugh> No. You're hooked up to a machine. The polygraph examiner contacts you through email or phone and they'll say, 'Hey, I have this date available. Can you come in?' 'Yes, I can come in.' You come in. You basically do like a little interview, like introductory, 'Hey, let's talk, let's meet each other.' They ask some questions of you, and then, you have to fill out a really big packet. And you are asked some of the same questions that you're asked in your original application. You fill that out and you turn it in and they go through it with you. It's their process. And then you're finally asked, you're under that pressure of the polygraph after that, and they do their magic. And then we find out whether or not you...and in some cases, people didn't lie. It's called No Deception Indicated. They didn't lie. However, they disclosed information that was different from their original application. A lot of that is mainly, in years before, it was drug use. So if they said in their original application, 'I used marijuana five times and my last time was five years ago.' And then in the polygraph they come in and say: 'last week I used, or like the day before.'

Dan Hoffman ([19:05](#)):

Wow.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:06](#)):

<Laugh> yes. Which is great because they didn't lie. However, they didn't tell the truth on the original application.

Dan Hoffman ([19:12](#)):

Got to be honest from the get go.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:13](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([19:13](#)):

So polygraph's done. Then what?

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:17](#)):

Background.

Dan Hoffman ([19:17](#)):

We confirm that they haven't been arrested or had felonies, blah, blah, blah.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:24](#)):

Is that your background?

Dan Hoffman ([19:26](#)):

What?

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:27](#)):

That's your idea of a background?

Dan Hoffman ([19:28](#)):

Well, yeah, you fingerprint them and you send it off somewhere. Then it comes back.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:33](#)):

You make it sound so basic. I do the backgrounds. Hello. There's more work in that.

Dan Hoffman ([19:36](#)):

Well, what else happens?

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:37](#)):

We talk to their family, siblings, grandparents.

Dan Hoffman ([19:44](#)):

So dangerous.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:44](#)):

Exactly. Right.

Dan Hoffman ([19:45](#)):

They're never gonna talk to my mom.

Katlynn Slonaker ([19:46](#)):

We talk to their associates. We talk to their references they list. We talk to their neighbors. We get a little bit more in depth. We look at their credit history, their credit report. Ask them questions about their childhood. When I do the interviews, it usually lasts about two hours. I try to get in depth. I wanna know who the person is that I'm doing this investigation on. I like to get really involved with this. So it's more than just checking...

Dan Hoffman ([20:15](#)):

We're giving these people a gun and putting them out in the community.

Katlynn Slonaker ([20:17](#)):

Exactly. I wanna know who I'm bringing into my department.

Dan Hoffman ([20:21](#)):

Absolutely.

Katlynn Slonaker ([20:22](#)):

Into our department.

Dan Hoffman ([20:23](#)):

Sorry to gloss over the background check.

Katlynn Slonaker ([20:25](#)):

Yeah, how dare you? How dare you?

Dan Hoffman ([20:27](#)):

So once you're done with the background check.

Katlynn Slonaker ([20:32](#)):

Yes, they have passed. Whoever does the background, investigator or myself, that actually has to be approved first before moving on. It's not just me saying giving the holy 'Yes, you're good to go.' It has to go through both Deputy Chiefs and the Chief. All of 'em have to sign off. If everything is good, and we have no follows to conduct from whatever questioning they may have, they're then scheduled for a psych exam.

Dan Hoffman ([20:56](#)):

What happens then?

Katlynn Slonaker ([20:57](#)):

That is very, very in depth, as well. What happens is, they get contacted, they're sent a packet from the physiologist. Okay. And again, lots of questions sometimes asking the same question, but in a different way. Again, I recommend for them to take their time. Don't rush through it. And then, they send it back before their actual assessment, their evaluation. And that doctor then looks at it, and then, she does an interview with them and she goes over the psych assessment. She goes over the questions that she might have that they may have answered a little bit differently, and it's showing one indication. But then another question was kind of where we are trying to go with the applicant. And then she will write up an evaluation as to her recommendation.

Dan Hoffman ([21:46](#)):

Then what happens? <Laughs> I feel like we're six months into the process, right now.

Katlynn Slonaker ([21:51](#)):

Yes. It really doesn't take six months, but then we do drug and medical. They're sent information in order to go get their drug and medical exam, usually from an urgent care through Valley Health. And hopefully, within one day, we hear back, as long as they don't have to send results or anything. We'll hear back that same day. They pass a drug test, medically, they look sound, they're approved to do it. And then we get a letter.

Dan Hoffman ([22:14](#)):

Then, then what?

Katlynn Slonaker ([22:17](#)):

And then, I call them after I get an approval from the Chief, Deputy Chiefs. If they say: 'yes, this looks great. All right, let's do it.' I call them. And I give them an offer over the phone. I say, 'We'd like to hire you on for Police Officer I. This is what your salary's going to be. We want you to start this day. What do you think?'

Dan Hoffman ([22:42](#)):

So that's kind of, again, back into a normal, what people might be familiar with. You get a call, you got the job. Can you start on this date? But when they start on that date, it's not like we just hand them a gun and point 'em to a car, and send 'em out in the street.

Katlynn Slonaker ([22:56](#)):

Oh, my gosh, no.

Dan Hoffman ([22:56](#)):

What happens after they've gotten the good news? They leave your hands. You hand them off to who?

Katlynn Slonaker ([23:03](#)):

Oh, they're still my baby. They're still my children.

Dan Hoffman ([23:06](#)):

Really? You train them?

Katlynn Slonaker ([23:11](#)):

Yes and no. So I'm kind of like their hen mother. I'm like their den mother, right? If you're a Cub Scout or anything. I bring them on and let's say that it's two weeks or a month, even before the academy starts. The chief loves to bring on pre-academy hires, is what we call them. They get a good insight into the department that they're working for. They get to do ride-alongs with patrol to see what they're getting into. They get to work with criminal investigations. We bring them on and they go through some training. They have lots of paperwork to sign. Lots of paperwork, not only for the department, but for the City. They have a lot of things to fill out. Tax forms, insurance forms. And then depending on what they're gonna be doing, if they are gonna go on the road, per chance and start field training, which is very rare, but it can happen. Then, they'll go through some other trainings. Most times, just work within

the department. They'll go on some ride-alongs. They'll work with me, if I have anything for them to do or in our office.

Dan Hoffman ([24:16](#)):

When do they go to the academy?

Katlynn Slonaker ([24:18](#)):

Once the academy starts...Literally, we just had a class start Wednesday.

Dan Hoffman ([24:22](#)):

Okay. How long might somebody be waiting for the academy?

Katlynn Slonaker ([24:28](#)):

I've had some people hired on a month or two before the academy. They were tired of doing the job they were doing. Or maybe they were even unemployed because the business closed and they're looking for the job to come on.

Dan Hoffman ([24:39](#)):

Going back to that first conversation, when they're like: 'Katlynn Slonaker, I want to be a police officer,' and you've asked them some questions. They put in their application. Typically, how long are we talking before they go to the academy?

Katlynn Slonaker ([24:59](#)):

To the academy?

Dan Hoffman ([24:59](#)):

To the academy.

Katlynn Slonaker ([25:02](#)):

Five, four months. It depends because the academy, there's two a year. There's usually a fall academy and then, there's a summer academy. We just had our fall academy. The academy itself is 19 weeks. So you have that amount of time, I do, to hire someone.

Dan Hoffman ([25:17](#)):

So from the day they have that conversation with you to the day they finish the academy.

Katlynn Slonaker ([25:24](#)):

Oh, okay.

Dan Hoffman ([25:25](#)):

Skipping ahead. We'll talk about the academy here in a second. Before they leave the academy, they're looking at a year. A year from that initial idea of, 'I wanna be a police officer' to 'My family's taken my pictures and I've graduated the academy.'

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Katlynn Slonaker ([25:44](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([25:45](#)):

A year. So this is pretty lengthy process.

New Speaker ([25:47](#)):

Oh yes. Definitely. The academy itself is, I mean, that's pretty lengthy right there.

Dan Hoffman ([25:53](#)):

Let's talk about the academy. What happens? I have no idea. I have some idea, but tell me about the academy. Cuz in my mind it's like bootcamp.

Katlynn Slonaker ([26:04](#)):

Well, it is, but it isn't. It's paramilitary. You're not getting screamed at.

Dan Hoffman ([26:09](#)):

They don't yell at you at all?

Katlynn Slonaker ([26:13](#)):

I think that's based on the instructor, maybe, there at the time, but not generally.

Dan Hoffman ([26:17](#)):

It's probably frowned upon these days.

Katlynn Slonaker ([26:19](#)):

Yeah. It's not. Yeah. You don't typically get that. So they go to the academy, just like our recruits that just started on Wednesday. It's an orientation day. And then they have to do their LawFit test. Another physical for the academy. They go through it. They learn basic stuff. It is a basic academy. Other jurisdictions that are larger, like Fairfax or Prince William, they have their own academy. Ours, however, Skyline Regional Criminal Justice Academy in Middletown is a multi-jurisdictional academy. You don't just have Winchester City going there. You have Frederick County, you have Strasburg, Rappahannock, Warren County, Clarke County. You could go with five different other agencies. So this academy is literally a basic academy because you have so many different agencies in there. It's not agency-based training. If that makes sense.

Dan Hoffman ([27:09](#)):

No, that makes sense. So, it's more or less like the movie Police Academy.

Katlynn Slonaker ([27:14](#)):

It is nothing <Laugh> like the movie Police Academy. That would actually be fun.

Dan Hoffman ([27:19](#)):

That's disappointing.

Katlynn Slonaker (27:20):

I know. Right?

Dan Hoffman (27:21):

Well, I'm sure this is fun. You're learning how to be a police officer.

Katlynn Slonaker (27:26):

Yeah. It's enlightening.

Dan Hoffman (27:28):

They make you run a lot?

Katlynn Slonaker (27:28):

They do. Yes. So you go home every day. You don't stay at the police academy.

Dan Hoffman (27:33):

Oh really? Okay.

Katlynn Slonaker (27:34):

Correct. It's Monday through Thursday. It's seven to five. Yeah. You have Friday, Saturday, Sunday off.

Dan Hoffman (27:40):

This is totally approachable.

Katlynn Slonaker (27:42):

Oh my gosh. Yeah. And the benefit because it's the State of Virginia, you're getting paid while you're in this academy. You get all of the supplies, gear.

Dan Hoffman (27:50):

The State pays for that or we pay for that?

Katlynn Slonaker (27:51):

We pay for that.

Dan Hoffman (27:53):

Oh. I got excited for a minute. <Laugh> I was like, wait a minute. This is great.

New Speaker (27:56):

<Laugh> In the State of Virginia, the departments typically pay for everything. Including you to go through the academy.

Dan Hoffman ([28:00](#)):

So we're investing a significant amount in you from the day you first talked to Katlynn until the day you are released from the academy. There's a significant investment in you.

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:13](#)):

Yes. And even through the academy. I mean, because it's multi-jurisdictional, you have other agencies coming in to teach you, but you also have Winchester City police officers coming in to teach you. You have our own detectives. It's amazing because we get a good view. Like, I go teach at the academy. I help teach patrol techniques.

Dan Hoffman ([28:29](#)):

Oh really?

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:30](#)):

Yeah. That's really fun.

Dan Hoffman ([28:32](#)):

We'll have to do another podcast on that.

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:33](#)):

Oh yeah, sure.

Dan Hoffman ([28:35](#)):

Patrol techniques.

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:36](#)):

Yeah. It's I just do the domestic part. There's a whole big part. I'm just a very small person in that.

Dan Hoffman ([28:41](#)):

Well.

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:41](#)):

Staturely, yes. I know. Thank you for pointing that.

Dan Hoffman ([28:45](#)):

This is a podcast so you can't see. She's actually three foot five.

Katlynn Slonaker ([28:48](#)):

I am five one. Thank you very much.

Dan Hoffman ([28:51](#)):

<Laugh>.

Katlynn Slonaker (28:51):

I am not a little person. <Laugh> But it's nice because we get to see our own people out in action. Especially in something like patrol techniques or officer survival because they're actually doing scenarios. They're wearing the uniform. They're acting as the cop, obviously in a safe environment, but we get to see how they're going to be on the road. A lot of those instructors are also field training officers. They get to see what they're getting into when it comes to possibly having them as a trainee.

Dan Hoffman (29:20):

Got it. So graduation. There's a ceremony. The parents show up.

Katlynn Slonaker (29:25):

Family, yeah.

Dan Hoffman (29:26):

The family shows up. What happens then? They show up at the actual police department for their first day. That's when we give 'em a gun, we put 'em a car, and send 'em on their way?

Katlynn Slonaker (29:38):

Well, we don't have to give 'em a gun because in the academy they get by an instructor.

Dan Hoffman (29:45):

But they don't keep that gun do they?

Katlynn Slonaker (29:47):

They can. They just qualified with it. So why not? They went through the testing. They are good to go.

Dan Hoffman (29:51):

So they already got the gun. They just go right to work.

Katlynn Slonaker (29:54):

No.

Dan Hoffman (29:54):

Oh, what happens?

Katlynn Slonaker (29:55):

Yes. Oh, it's so engaging. They go through field training. There are three phases in field training. First, second, third, and each phase they do a little bit more on their own. In first phase, the first couple days, you're just getting to know your Field Training Officer or your FTO. They're getting to know you. You're getting to know them. They may not even let you drive. You may just be riding in the passenger side and just simply observing. It's called a Limbo Day. You're observing what they do. How they handle things. They're introducing you to the Department. If you weren't already hired on and got that ability with me to get introduced to people they're doing it. They're showing you where to get your paperwork from. They're showing you where dispatch is, where you need to go get other paperwork. Whenever you're

out on the streets that you might need for a report. And then they go into, depending on the trainees, always depend on the trainee and the FTO, they may handle a simple call, like a civil dispute where really no criminal action needs to take place. There's nothing that we really need to do, but we just need to listen to them and direct them in the rate phase where they need to go. They might handle something like that. The FTO might say, 'I need you to handle this phone call for me.' And it's simply just someone who needs some guidance. They could do that or they could say, 'let me see you do a traffic stop. Do you see a violation?' Maybe they might be driving around. Maybe the trainee is allowed to drive and they do a traffic stop. The FTO sees where they're at and then, where need to be. And it really just depends on the Field Training Officer. First phase is more like getting to know the Department and getting to know the city; and getting your whereabouts with where your gear is; what the car can do; who everybody is in the Department; who you need to go to for timesheets, that sort of thing. Administrative.

Dan Hoffman ([31:42](#)):

That's phase one.

Katlynn Slonaker ([31:43](#)):

Yep. Phase two is more like a 50/50. Again, it's dependent on the trainee and the FTO, but you are taking the calls. So, let's say you and I are training together and you're my trainee. I'm your Field Training Officer. We have something like a larceny, like a shoplifting. I'm gonna tell you in the car, we're gonna go over the shoplifting. 'Hey, do you know what to do? What makes it a misdemeanor? What makes it a felony? 'What's your first thing gonna do? What are some things you're gonna look out for?' We're gonna go over that call. Then, we're gonna go to it and I'm gonna say, 'all right, you're gonna handle it.' Then, I'm gonna let you get the information. Talk to the victim, possibly the suspects there.

Dan Hoffman ([32:19](#)):

How nervous are they?

Katlynn Slonaker ([32:21](#)):

It's very nerve wracking.

Dan Hoffman ([32:22](#)):

I bet.

Katlynn Slonaker ([32:23](#)):

As being one who was obviously in that spot at one point in time in my career, it was very nerve wracking. Cuz you have your FTO looking at you and then you have the victim who's expecting you to know what the heck you're doing. And then you have the suspect like, 'oh man, they are totally green.' They don't know...

Dan Hoffman ([32:39](#)):

Who's trying to pull it over on you.

Katlynn Slonaker ([32:41](#)):

Yeah. <Laugh> It's very, very terrifying. But that's why you have your FTO there, right? The FTO says, 'all right, you gathered this information, do you think you need to get a little bit more?' They will do that. They'll help you along. And soon enough, you'll be able to do it on your own and get the right information. They'll have you come back and type a report and they'll see how you do on your reports. Third phase, final phase, typically is you're doing a lot of the stuff yourself. Your FTO is basically there to guide you. They're like your guardian angel looking over your shoulder saying 'Yeah, you're doing great. You're doing awesome. Maybe ask this question.' They're always gonna be there for guidance though.

Dan Hoffman ([33:21](#)):

And then after that's phase three. What happens next?

Katlynn Slonaker ([33:24](#)):

Yeah. Afterwards, Solo Review Board.

Dan Hoffman ([33:27](#)):

Solo Review Board.

Katlynn Slonaker ([33:28](#)):

Yes. You're still not released yet.

Dan Hoffman ([33:29](#)):

Oh geez.

Katlynn Slonaker ([33:30](#)):

The Solo Review Board you get it scheduled through me. If your FTOs have said 'Yes. They're good to go,' what we like to do is do a solo ride again with your first Field Training Officer. So your first Field Training Officer who saw you when you were totally green, you were totally new. You didn't know what the heck you were doing when it came to a shoplifting, what information to obtain. They get to see you actually do it all from start to finish, and then, they can say, 'Yes, I'm giving you my blessing. You're good to go. You've progressed. Like this is amazing.' Then, they go to their Board, which usually has me in it, my Deputy Chief who's oversees me, and their First Training Officer, if scheduling allows. If not, one of their other Field Training Officers. They are asked a series of questions and scenarios that they need to be able to answer in order to get released.

Dan Hoffman ([34:18](#)):

Awesome. At that point, they've passed their Solo Board. Then, they're on their own? They're a police officer.

Katlynn Slonaker ([34:28](#)):

Yes!

Dan Hoffman ([34:28](#)):

In this process that we've talked about from initial interest through the application, through the different screening mechanisms, through the interviews, through the academy, through the field training, a year and a half.

Katlynn Slonaker ([34:44](#)):

Yeah. Could be.

Dan Hoffman ([34:46](#)):

Wow. That's a lot. And that process, but that process is not dissimilar to pretty much 90% of the other jurisdictions in the country. You're not gonna go to, you know, D.C. and get something completely different than this. You're not gonna go to Charlottesville. You're not gonna go to Kansas City and get a vastly different process. You're gonna learn some different laws and the different rules for that jurisdiction, but generally this process is kind of consistent.

Katlynn Slonaker ([35:18](#)):

Yes. Their training hours for field training could actually be different, but that's cuz our hours that we do are designated by DCJS, for the State of Virginia. They could be just be different for a different state. And Virginia didn't always require psychs to be done. Psychologicals to be done for applicants. They do now. Another state may not have the requirements. They may get to bypass that or even polygraph.

Dan Hoffman ([35:43](#)):

So Katlynn, Katlynn, Slonaker.

Katlynn Slonaker ([35:48](#)):

<Laugh> Sponaker.

Dan Hoffman ([35:48](#)):

Thank you very much.

Katlynn Slonaker ([35:50](#)):

You're welcome.

Dan Hoffman ([35:50](#)):

This has been very interesting. If someone is interested after listening to this and they're like, 'Yep. I want to do that.' Do they just go to the police website?

Katlynn Slonaker ([36:00](#)):

They can yeah. Winchesterpolice.org, or the can go to the City website and go under employment, or jobs is what it's labeled. And then they just, if they go to the City's, I'm sorry, the police department's, then, they go to the recruitment tab. There's a nice picture there of someone getting their badge. Then, they scroll down to step one and click on a link. It takes them to the City's website in order to apply for Police Officer I.

Dan Hoffman ([36:22](#)):

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So everybody, if you wanna meet Katlynn, just go to the website.

Katlynn Slonaker ([36:25](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([36:25](#)):

And and give her a chat up. If you're in some other jurisdiction, you're listening to this, it's pretty much the same. Go to the City's website. I'm sure you can find it with a ten second Google search and reach out. Give it a try.

Katlynn Slonaker ([36:40](#)):

We are hiring now. I've started the process. I've started reviewing applications literally yesterday for the next academy. So apply. Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([36:49](#)):

Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Katlynn Slonaker ([36:51](#)):

Thank you.

Dan Hoffman ([36:58](#)):

So that was Katlynn. Next time, Amy Simmons will join us for the interview, but she currently has a frog in her throat and a lot of boogers in her nose. Not COVID though. We just tested her. So next time for Rouss Review-City Works, it'll be a tag team interview with Amy and myself and somebody that we pick. Something interesting about the City. Dunno what it's gonna be yet. But we'll figure it out. So, thanks everybody, and see you around City Hall.