1. **Purpose and Scope**
   1. This policy will govern the procedure to be followed when an application for membership is submitted to the Chews Landing Fire Department.
   2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a standard process is followed for every application, that each applicant is treated fairly and consistently, and that decisions made are compliant with all applicable standards, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Act (EEOAA).
   3. Members involved in the applicant background check process must ensure that information received is properly protected as per the requirements of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), and is shared only with those department members involved in the applicant process.
   4. Department members are encouraged to serve as ambassadors for the department, and should make every effort to recruit eligible members of our community to serve as volunteer firefighters.
   5. The Administrator is responsible for ensuring that applications for membership are available at the station and on the department website [Attachment 16-3(1)].
   6. The officer in charge of any detail where the department interacts with members of the general public should ensure that recruitment material and applications for membership are available for distribution.
2. **Policy**
   1. Completed applications for membership should be promptly forwarded to the Administrator.
   2. Upon receipt of an application, the Administrator will take the following steps:
      1. Review the application to ensure it has been properly completed, signed and notarized, and a copy of the applicant’s driver’s license is attached.
         1. Confirm the applicant has signed the Disclosure and Authorization Form To Obtain Consumer Reports For Employment Purposes.
      2. Initiate an Applicant Checklist [Attachment 16-3(2)], noting the date the application was received.
      3. Notify the Chief, President and applicant that the application has been received and is being processed.
      4. Submit a request for a criminal background check via the contracted third party vendor.
         1. Document the information received, and ensure the information is properly protected, and shared only with those involved in the application process, as per the requirements of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA).
      5. Note the completion date of the background check on the Applicant checklist.
      6. Check the status of the applicant’s driver’s license via the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Customer Abstract Information Retrieval (CAIR) database.
         1. Document the information received.
         2. Note the completion date of the Driver’s License check on the Applicant Checklist.
      7. Forward the application package, along with the information obtained, to the Chairman of the Investigating Committee.
   3. Upon receipt of the application, the Chairman of the Investigating Committee will ensure the following is completed:
      1. Attempt to interview all references listed on the application, utilizing the Applicant Reference Interview Form [Attachment 16-3(3)].
      2. Attempt to interview all employers (current and previous) listed on the application, utilizing the Employers Interview Form [Attachment 16-3(4)].
      3. Attempt to interview the Chief or appropriate representative of any other emergency service organizations to which the applicant has either been a member or applied for membership, utilizing the Emergency Services Organization Interview Form [Attachment 16-3(5)].
      4. Attempt to interview any other persons who may have information pertinent to the applicant’s eligibility for membership.
      5. Check available social media sites.
      6. Document all information received.
      7. Note the date the Background Check was completed on the New Member checklist.
      8. Forward the application package, along with the information received, to the Chief.
   4. Upon receipt of the application package, the Chief will review the file to ensure that all required checks have been completed and documented.
      1. The Chief will arrange for an in-person interview of the applicant, utilizing the attached Applicant Interview Form (Attachment 16-3(6).
      2. After the interview, the Chief will make a determination regarding the eligibility of the applicant for membership.
         1. When necessary, the Chief may consult with other members of the department (President, Executive Board, Administrator, Legal Counsel) before making a final decision.
         2. If the applicant is provisionally approved for membership, the Chief and President will note same by signing and dating the New Member Checklist.
         3. If the application for membership is denied, the reasons for denial will be documented and placed in the file.
         4. The Chief will then forward the application package to the Administrator, along with the membership determination.
      3. The Administrator will review the package to ensure that all appropriate checks have been completed and properly documented.
      4. The Administrator will review the decision of the Chief/President to ensure it is in compliance with the previously noted laws and standards.
      5. If a decision is made to deny the membership application, the Administrator and/or Chief will notify the applicant of the denial and the reason for same.
         1. If information obtained as a result of the criminal background or driver’s license checks contributed to a denial of the application for membership, the applicant will be offered a copy of the documents obtained and an opportunity to dispute the information contained therein.
         2. Depending on the circumstances, the applicant will also be advised of the date when they may reapply for membership (usually a minimum of one year from the date of the original application).
      6. If a decision is made to accept the membership application, the Administrator will contact the applicant and offer him or her a provisional membership offer, pending completion of a department physical / drug screening.
         1. The Administrator will then assist the applicant with scheduling an appointment to obtain a physical examination / drug screen from the department’s medical provider.
         2. If the drug screen is negative, and the medical provider determines that the applicant is medically qualified, the Chief, President and applicant will be notified, and the applicant will be accepted into the company as a Probationary Firefighter.
         3. If the medical provider determines the applicant is not medically qualified, the Administrator will consult with the medical provider to determine if the condition is temporary or permanent, and whether reasonable accommodations can be made to overcome the issue.
            1. If the condition is determined to be permanent, and cannot be addressed via reasonable accommodations, the Administrator will consult with the District’s Legal Counsel for advice.
            2. If the District’s Legal Counsel agrees that the applicant’s medical condition renders him or her ineligible for membership, the applicant will be notified by the Administrator and/or Chief.
         4. If the medical provider advises that the applicant tested positive for drugs, the applicant will be advised of the positive test result and that their membership application is being denied.
      7. No department property (pager, PPE, uniforms, etc.) will be issued to applicants, nor will the applicant be authorized to respond to calls for service or participate in training events until the above described process is complete and the applicant has been approved for membership by the Administrator.