

**BOARD OF CITY SERVICE COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF MILWAUKEE**

IN THE MATTER OF
ANTHONY BASS
V.
CITY OF MILWAUKEE

FINDINGS AND DECISION

This is the written determination of the Board of City Service Commissioners on the administrative appeal hearing in this case. A timely appeal was received from Anthony Bass ("Appellant") challenging his discharge from the position of Bridge Operator, Department of Public Works ("Department" or "DPW") on October 27, 2025.

An administrative appeal hearing was held in hybrid format (both in-person and by video conference) pursuant to Sec. 63.43, Wis. Stats. and City Service Commission Rule XIV, Section 7, on Friday, March 27, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. The witnesses were sworn and all testimony was taken by a Court Reporter.

Appearances:

City Service Commission:

Francis Bock, President
Marilyn Miller, Vice President
Janet Cleary, Commissioner
Steve Smith, Commissioner
Heidi Wick Spoerl, Commissioner
Jackie Q. Carter, Executive Secretary
Kristin Urban, Staffing Services Manager
Elizabeth Moore, Administrative Support Specialist

Commission Represented By:

Lauri Rollings, Assistant City Attorney

Appellant Represented By:

Brad Ames, Vice President AFMSCE Local 23

Department Represented By:

Andrew Simons, Infrastructure Department Administrator, DPW

Witnesses:

Nicholas Doney, Captain, Milwaukee Boat Line
Nick Goodwin, Bridge Maintenance Manager, DPW
Aisha Hendree, Workforce Planning and Certification Supervisor, DER
Dan Thomas Administrative Services Director, DPW
Anthony Bass, Appellant

ISSUE

The issue is whether or not there was just cause for the action taken by the Department in accordance with sec. 63.43, Stats.

Based upon the evidence in the record, the Commission finds as follows:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Appellant was first employed by the City as a Code Enforcement Intern with the Department of Neighborhood Services on December 13, 2021.
2. Appellant was employed by the City as a Bridge Operator with the Department of Public Works on September 4, 2022.
3. On November 12, 2024, Appellant attended a pre-disciplinary hearing related to an incident that occurred on August 6, 2024 in which he operated the Highland Avenue bridge and admitted to lowering the bridge while a vessel was still under the bridge.
4. At that pre-disciplinary hearing, Appellant was advised of the proper operating procedures. He received retraining as a result of the incident. He was informed that future violations of any work rules, policies, or procedures could result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.
5. On August 22, 2025, DPW management received a phone call from a City Hall operator informing them that a woman called to report an incident on the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge.
6. The caller stated a pedestrian was walking across the bridge and without any warning the bridge started to rise.
7. The caller stated the pedestrian, who was their mother, had to jump down several feet to the sidewalk below, falling in the process.
8. Appellant was the bridge operator assigned to the Wisconsin Avenue bridge at the time of the incident.
9. Nicholas Doney, Captain of the Vista King boat witnessed this incident. In a written statement and in testimony at the hearing, Doney stated the bridge started to open and that

he radioed to the bridge operator that a pedestrian was standing on the bridge behind the traffic gate.

10. Doney observed the bridge lift, then stop, and the pedestrian jumping down from the moveable span.
11. The lead worker at the time of this incident reported observing a pedestrian walking on the the bridge as the gate was coming down and that when all the gates were down the bridge went up. The lead worker stated the Vista King captain called via radio stating, "Wisconsin, you have a pedestrian inside your southwest gate," and the bridge stopped, went down and the gate went up.
12. DPW management received an incident report from Appellant that stated an incident happened on the bridge that day. The description provided did not match the story management heard from the caller.
13. Following the incident, Appellant left the scene.
14. Appellant did not answer multiple phone calls or text messages in the hours after the incident took place.
15. At 6:50 PM, DPW management went to Appellant's residence to secure his statement and to engage him in "reasonable suspicion" drug and alcohol testing. Appellant did not answer the door.
16. Appellant finally made contact with DPW management on August 23, 2025 at 3:51 PM.
17. Arrangements were made for Appellant to meet with DPW management at the Plankinton Street Bridge on August 24, 2025 at 3:50 PM.
18. At that meeting, Appellant was informed he was to be engaged in "reasonable suspicion" drug and alcohol testing regarding this incident. Appellant stated he was not at work and that he had been drinking. He left the premises refusing to participate in the testing.
19. A pre-discharge hearing occurred on August 29, 2025 for Appellant's violation of City Service Commission Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraphs J, K, L and Q.

20. City Service Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraph J authorizes discipline if an employee “[i]s offensive in conduct or language towards the public or towards city officers or employees.”
21. City Service Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraph K authorizes discipline if an employee “[i]s incompetent or inefficient in the performance of or fails or refuses to perform the duties required for the position.”
22. City Service Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraph L authorizes discipline if an employee “[i]s careless or negligent or makes unauthorized use or permits the unauthorized use of the property of the city.”
23. City Service Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraph Q authorizes discipline if an employee “[h]as refused or failed to comply with departmental work rules, policies or procedures.”
24. During the pre-discharge hearing, Appellant initially denied lifting the bridge and that someone had to jump off the bridge deck. Appellant then acknowledged the boat captain alerted him of the situation and that a pedestrian was beyond the barrier within the safety zone.
25. During the pre-discharge hearing, Appellant was offered the ability to be voluntarily demoted to the position of City Laborer.
26. On September 2, 2025, Appellant notified DPW management of his intention to accept the City Laborer job offer.
27. Appellant was advised repeatedly of the pre-placement steps he needed to complete to accept the City Laborer position.
28. Appellant did not complete the pre-placement steps and the job offer was rescinded.
29. Appellant was discharged.
30. Appellant filed a timely appeal.
31. At the appeal hearing for this matter, multiple witnesses testified a pedestrian was walking across the bridge when the bridge started to rise and the pedestrian had to jump down several feet to the sidewalk below.

32. At the appeal hearing for this matter, multiple witnesses testified that following the August 22, 2025 incident Appellant left the scene, did not make himself available for a prompt post-incident investigation, and refused to participate in “reasonable suspicion” drug and alcohol testing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Appellant was an employee holding a classified position in the Department, the appointing authority within the meaning of Sec. 63.43, Wis. Stats., and the City Service Commission Rules. The Department demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that Appellant violated City Service Commission Rule XIV, Section 12, Paragraphs J, K, L and Q, based on Appellant’s raising the bridge while a pedestrian was walking across the bridge, failing to make a proper report of the incident, leaving the scene of the incident without participating in an investigation, and refusing to participate in “reasonable suspicion” drug testing related to the incident.
2. Based on the preponderance of the evidence, the Department did have just cause to discipline Appellant.
3. Based on the preponderance of the evidence, there was just cause to discharge the Appellant.

ORDER

By unanimous vote of the Board, the discharge of Appellant on October 27, 2025, is affirmed.

Dated and signed at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this _____ 2026.

FRANCIS BOCK, PRESIDENT