



Employees Advisory Council



to continually improve the Pinellas County classified employees' quality of work life

Approved by the EAC

EAC - Representative Meeting Minutes – May 19, 2010

Call to Order

- Paul Rogers called the meeting to order at 830am

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes were approved as written.

Introductions

- A sign-in sheet has been filed and made part of the record

Comments from Peggy Rowe

- Peggy asked if anyone had any questions. She basically has nothing new to discuss. All directors have turned in their budgets. It will be late June or early July before anything is finalized.
- Paul Rogers asked about the Times article on budget cutback numbers of 40/40 vs 60/20. Peggy said nothing is final on the figures.
- Mercedes asked if the BCC is looking at cutting within their unit, hours etc. Peggy said possibly some departments could be changing to part time where feasible.
- Paul asked about a severance package. Peggy said there will be no severance package other than the employee's accumulated leave time. That most employees will be able to stay until September 30, 2010 with a few exceptions, like BTS due to security issues.
- Rhonda asked about the amount of annual leave that can be taken with you. An employee can take 3 times their yearly accrual.
- Paul asked if the departments have been trained on the retention score. Peggy said they were and expressed that HR is assisting the departments in the process.
- Rhonda told those in attendance that Public Works will be eliminating 146 positions. Nothing has been decided on department merging yet. It is still unsure how or if this will impact the bumping process.
- Peggy's advice was that HR will do all they can to help those laid off land on their feet.
- The state issue with the Clerk's Office is off the table, there are no lay offs on the court side.
- Those in the Drop Program prior to July 1, 2010 will receive 6.5%, this will be changed after July to 3%. *[HR update: HB 5607 was vetoed by the Governor on May 28, 2010, so the interest stays the same.]*

BTS

- The plan of the BTS Director to have current employees laid off and rehired into exempt positions was discussed by those present in great length. Outsourcing is an option for tech support and the call center. Also, those in BTS were told if the director cannot find a current employee qualified for what he needs then he will be hiring from the outside.

Meeting Adjourned @ 10:35 am

Next meeting – June 16, 2010 at 8:30 am



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Employees' Advisory Council
Delegate Meeting
Thursday, May 27, 2010

Extension Services
12520 Ulmerton Road

Call to Order 8:05am

Comments from the Chairman-

1. We came through the State Legislative issues fairly well
2. Peggy had an idea of possible lunch meetings to inform employees of legislative issues
3. Drop went from 6.5% to 3% but still needs to be approved by the Governor. We need to keep lobbying to keep ourselves safe. *[HR update: HB 5607 was vetoed by the Governor on May 28, 2010, so the interest stays the same.]*
4. EAC had concerns about BTS to move approximately 55 classified employees to exempt positions. Paul went to Human Resources (HR), but there is not much they can do.
5. Budget has not been finalized at this time.

Comments from Peggy Rowe, Director of Human Resources

1. FRS issues: make sure you are a registered voter. You have more influence with them if you are a voter. Tallahassee really does not take notice of your opinions if you do not vote.
 - a. Remember that handwritten letters are the most effective way to get your opinions heard.
 - b. Email can also be effective but please remember to do this from your home computer and email address
2. BTS clarification: An employer can not just say that all classified employees will be turned into exempt positions. What Paul Alexander did was identify positions that will be eliminated. He restructured the organization so that some classifications are being outsourced. The higher level positions are the ones he is going to retain or create new positions within the classifications. (question posed to Peggy) Can other Appointing Authorities do this? When you are an exempt employee federal guidelines state that the employer does not have to pay overtime so therefore there are thresholds that are designed by criteria as to whether that position can be exempt. The federal government has decided that certain kinds of jobs can be exempt and the technology field is one of those fields which has many of those job classifications. Bob LaSala has not considered this an option for BCC.
3. Time line on Layoff announcements: On the 8th of June the Constitutionals will present their budgets to the County Commissioners. July 13th is where the preliminary "where we are going" numbers come in. So each department will give out possible layoffs or eliminations at the end of June or beginning of July. Again this is possible layoffs or eliminations. Employees slated for layoff or position elimination will be allowed to stay at their job until September 30th. This will give the employee time to go to the resume' classes and other classes that HR will provide.

Questions for Peggy:

1. **How will the employee be notified?**
They will receive a letter with a packet from their director
2. **When will the employees receive their scores for retention?** The Appointing Authorities already have the continuous service, performance and veterans' preference scores from HR. They (the

Appointing Authorities) are currently working on the operational needs part of the scoring. I suggest you wait until your department is done with their component to ask for your score. Remember this is a very painful process for all parties involved.

3. **When does the final calculation have to be done?** End of June or the early part of July. The directors share the scores with HR and HR will be making sure that all the rules were followed.
4. **Why would anyone consider outsourcing?** You would have to ask Paul Alexander that question. Basically it comes down to money. Technology has lost ½ its budget from 2 years ago.
5. **Why is Pinellas so anti-furlough when 37 counties have done it?** Essentially a furlough is a pay cut. Eventually the economy will pick up and if you are not in a position to restore that time to those people then the pay cut continues. On one hand it may save some money but essentially it is a pay cut by another name.
6. **What if the furlough is voluntary?** Yes some departments have done that, but not everyone can financially do that.
7. **Have they decided if the 80 million will be divided 40/40 or 60/20 yet?** It looks like it will be a 40/40 but nothing official yet.
8. **When is the last date they can be notified about layoffs?** End of June beginning of July.
9. **Can we take a voluntary salary reduction if it will save jobs?** Peggy asked, how long would you be willing to take a salary reduction? The budget crisis will be with us for a long time. Again if we take a couple of days off a year it is still only a temporary solution to a long term problem. Furlough days are not off the table as well as reduction in hours.
10. **Is Highway being consolidated with Parks?** They are looking at many departments for consolidation. Some may be consolidating by October 1. To answer your question no, but some functions maybe.
11. **Could furlough days be addressed with flex time or how about job sharing where people are willing to work fewer hours?** This is also a consideration but the last thing we want to do is reduce people.
12. **When the Sheriff comes back and says “I can’t meet my target” Bob says that is something the county will have to pick up. How will this look?** The Sheriff has to present his budget by June and they may ask him to reduce, but ultimately its Bobs budget and he has to meet it.
13. **Has anything trickled down on how the relationship between the County Administrator and County Commissioners is going?** They function well. We are still in good hands.
14. **Why is it that we are compensating our deficit through personnel?** Why not sell some assets? Empty buildings and land could be sold, is there a willingness on the Commissioners part to look at those type things? Nothing is off the table at this time.
15. **If the Constitutionals don’t meet budget does Bob LaSala have to come to the Board for more cuts?** There is no real hard answer for that. The Board will be receiving the budget on the 8th and it will depend on how much they want to push.
16. **Can we ask that the “Pennies for Pinellas” go towards our deficit?** That would involve the Commissioners and others and would require a vote via ballot.
17. **With expenses continuing why have we not started charging to go into our parks?** That is something you would want to approach with your elected officials. These suggestions should really go to them but I am passing them along. You may want to go to the intranet to see what is being adopted or presented.
18. **Is Bob or the Administrators offering to take a pay cut?** I will ask.
19. **Can we invite Bob to our next meeting?** * Paul commented that Bob told the Personnel Board that he is here to make the county function not provide employment. Peggy replied that you will not find an individual who is a stronger advocate for the employee then Bob. He is finding ways to avoid employee reduction where he can. While he feels so strongly about the employees he also recognizes that the county has an 80 million dollar deficit and must make the two meet. ***(Paul said to clarify that Bob basically said “I have to run the County” but he just doesn’t have the money to do that. It may sound callous but that’s his job)**
20. **Bob has said that he is going to “flatten” the organization, top to bottom. Is this going to happen?** There will be some reductions in that area this year.
21. **All we ever hear about is the employees being cut. Maybe we should have the public educated on what else is being cut?** Yes more public communication on what that would look like would be helpful.

Ending Comments from Peggy: A good resource is the intranet. Go there and hit BCC Agenda. This will let you know what is being discussed.

Closing Comments from Charles Toney:

Janet Long will be conducting a meeting tonight at the Seminole Library.

I suggest that you go on line to see who is running for election this year. You can find this information at the Supervisor of Elections website.

Even though the 6.5% dropped to 3% the COLA (for FRS) had increased. [\[See HR update above.\]](#)

A reminder for job sharing-If you go below 30 hours it can drastically reduce your health benefits.

Health insurance will be going up but we don't know how much that will be at this time. Pinellas County is self insured.

June 10th is the next Personnel Board meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 9:55am



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Approved by the EAC

Employees' Advisory Council
Wednesday – April 21, 2010

1. Call to Order

Paul Rogers called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.
Approval of minutes

2. Comments from Peggy Rowe

Peggy Rowe will be doing a special "Ask Peggy" again. Peggy feels this helps keep the lines of communication open.
Peggy conveyed that Bob LaSala would like to thank everyone for their patience at this time. Committees are still looking into cost saving ideas.
Constitutional budgets are due May 1, 2010 but it will be June or July before individuals will know of any possible pending layoffs.

*****FIRE DRILL*****

There have been rumors that individuals know that they are going to be laid off, but at this time no official notification has gone out with that information. Having said that, if you know your position is being discontinued or eliminated and you have never held another position or classification with the county then yes you can possibly be laid off. This is the kind of assumptions that are probably being made.

Questions to Peggy:

What is the likely hood that you can stay until September (end of fiscal year) if you are laid off?

The likely hood is that you will not be staying until September. Although many possibilities are being visited.

[HR update: Since the date of this meeting, a decision has been made that affected employees will remain employed in Pinellas County through September 30, 2010, with some limited exceptions. Those notifications will occur by the end of June.]

What will the County be doing for employees who are displaced?

Just like last year, the county will be offering help for employees transitioning out. The county is very sensitive to the financial issues of the employees and working hard to find solutions. The library is already geared up and will be having classes on Resume' writing etc.

If budget cuts are made what are the odds of giving pay until October?

Options are being looked at like severance, with that being said the Constitutionals are being asked to meet a 97% of their budget. Everything that is not spent this year helps offset the impact of the budget next year.

If someone has maxed out the 600 hours they can take will they loose the additional?

They can only take 3x the annual leave. The employee may want to do an Annual Leave Exchange when that comes available.

With retirements happening are they factoring this in for the 3% difference of the budget?
In some case yes and some cases no.

More Comments from Peggy

None of the constitutionals have submitted budgets formally at this time.

Please encourage employees to send any questions into the “Ask Peggy”

“All service time” with UPS is what is the new piece of the retention score vs. time in class as it was in the past.

[Note from HR: The maximum points awarded for continuous service is 20 points. See <http://ups.co.pinellas.fl.us/> for complete information.]

3. Legislative Issues:

Bill 5701 seems to have died in committee. This is the Bill that affects our FRS.

Questions about the FRS:

Is FRS offering a buyout?

They do not offer any buyouts

Would it benefit them more to retire now or wait until October?

It seems as though everything is a stalemate concerning our retirement at this time. You may want to contact the financial planner or Human Resources.

Can you take your retirement and roll it over into your own investment plan?

Yes, call Personnel for more information. This is only a once in a lifetime choice. But again call Personnel for more information or the FRS before making any decisions.

Will we be forced to do an employee contribution?

Out of all the Bills presented this year this Bill seems likely to be the one that will be coming up again next year.

4. Set New Goals:

Since there is no money to go after we need to seek other things to seek in the future.

The Advocate program is one of our successes and we continue to improve this program. This program has had positive results.

Lisa Wombles asked what the hold up for the “Exchange of Leave” that we have been asking about for almost 2 years now?

It seems as though a program needs to be finished before this can be implemented.

Clerks Finance is a key component in implementing this and at this time they are not ready.

Would it not be to the employee’s advantage to have this done as soon as possible?

With the possibility of layoffs, it would allow employees to exchange their time and this would be very beneficial financially for them.

Again the Clerks Finance department needs to sign off on this and that would be a possibility when the “Oracle” system is complete. There are two Gateways and so one part is complete and we are waiting on the green light for the second.

Can an employee use the Advocate Program to challenge their layoff?

No, you can only appeal your layoff up to your Appointing Authority.

[Note from HR: See <http://ups.co.pinellas.fl.us/Transition/pdf/III%202%202%20%20Rule%20XXIII%20Layoff%2002-24-10.pdf> - Personnel Rule XXII. "Layoff, Displacement and Re-Employment" for complete information.]

Paul Rogers asks EAC what are some suggestions they have for New Goals?

Lisa Wombles is working on the amount of time your supervisor can write you up on something. Right now there is no rule that says a manager can not write you up for something you did a year ago. An employee only has 10 days to grieve it. She is also working on the inactive verbiage. Because in reality your discipline action never goes away.

*****Break*****

Kristina Curi would like to see maybe if there is some kind of non-monetary benefit. I have heard there is a committee trying to do just that. Maybe increase the leave time? Not a lot but maybe something?

Bonnie Desmond asks is there a way we as employees can rate or review your supervisor? This may promote more accountability on the supervisor's part.

Teresa Benyo suggests that there be training available to all employees who seek it. If we are to be judged on what we know and how effective we are to the operation but are never afforded the opportunity to go to training then how can we be held accountable for that part of our evaluation?

Rhonda Calder asks about the Gold, Silver and Bronze awards which are time extra time off. If they can give extra time off for this why is it any different for extra time off according to your retention score?

Randy Rose suggests that there are ways to save the county money and in turn this would save jobs. Maybe utilities can see it to the public or Furlough days?

Mercedes Pearson thinks that the EAC has some responsibility to put out some suggestions on how the employees can be appreciated non- monetarily. Why can we not have 2 in service days a year? Maybe training ½ and the second part back at office to get caught up. We need to give employees time to breath. She agrees that training needs to given; maybe supervisors can do the training.

Todd Crawford likes the training idea and would like to remind the employees that the county will reimburse college tuition. That is an avenue for the employee to pursue.

Meeting Adjourned 10: 40