

Human Resources Committee
September 4, 2008
3:30 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room

Approved 10/2/08

Present: J. Dennis, D. Kiefer, W. Burbank (arrived at 3:38 p.m.), L. McBean-Clairborne
Excused: M. Sigler
Staff: A. Fitzpatrick, J. Thomas, B. Kominos, Personnel Department; C. Demarco, Mental Health Department employee; M. Lynch, Public Information Officer, K. Fuller, Legislature Office

Call to Order

Mr. Dennis called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

Ms. Kiefer said she had believed there would be information relating to a reclassification of title on the agenda; noting that administrative policy indicates an appeal for the particular department involved would come to the Committee. Ms. Fitzpatrick said the normal process would have brought an appeal to the Committee, however, at a meeting with herself, Mr. Dennis, Mr. Whicher, and Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, she was directed to authorize the reclassification. Ms. Kiefer stated it is contrary to the administrative policy, noting a lot of discussion had taken place regarding procedure when the policy was adopted. Mr. Dennis said there is no longer a need for a reclassification as the individual has tendered a resignation. He agreed with Ms. Kiefer that the administrative policy states if there is not agreement with the reclassification determination by Personnel that appeals for staff located in Personnel, County Administration, or the Legislature Office should come to Committee. Ms. Kiefer stated that although the issue is no longer valid, she disagrees with the fact the County Administrator and Chair of the Legislature did not follow the administrative policy and suggested the matter be reviewed further.

Chair's Report

Mr. Dennis announced the Personnel Department received an employee appreciation certificate from New York State Department of Labor for National Disability Awareness Month for October 2008, acknowledging the Personnel Department's demonstrated commitment of providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Members of the Committee expressed their congratulations to the Department.

The Committee was informed the arbitration for the Road Patrol would take place on October 27th; it is hoped that present County Administrator, Steve Whicher, would be available to provide testimony on behalf of the County. *Mr. Dennis will verify if Mr. Whicher is able to be in attendance at the meeting as he believes it is important to have his input.*

Personnel Department

Mr. Dennis noted the Workforce Utilization Report has been modified to indicate when the report includes an individual was removed for cause.

Exit Interviews

Ms. Kiefer expressed her surprise that at the previous meeting it was noted exit interviews were not found to be a useful tool.

Mr. Burbank arrived at this time.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the County's experience that letters of retirement or resignation are normally explicit as to the reason for leaving County employment. She has received some sample exit interviews from other counties that could be provided, if desired. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stated that from a

diversity and inclusion perspective an exit interview could be useful; she would like the County to consider possible implementation. In answer to Mr. Dennis' question, Mrs. McBean-Clairborne believes exit interviews should come from the Personnel Department rather than Department Heads.

Personnel Budget

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the budget information provided was in response to last month's discussion regarding core increases from 2005 to 2007 for printing, postage, civil service exam expenses, and medical exams. She noted the County does not charge for civil service exams as a result of a Legislative decision several years ago. Although members of the Committee did not feel that decision should be amended, Ms. Kiefer asked if it should be mentioned to other Legislators during the budget process. The Committee also was told if an individual cross-filed an exam with other counties they are expected to pay each county for the exam cost; it was suggested the State law should be amended to allow cross-filing without the additional cost.

Mr. Burbank inquired about the cost of recruitment of employees. Ms. Fitzpatrick said Personnel does the process and charges the appropriate department(s) for recruitment expenses. The recent County Administrator search costs were borne by the Legislature. He then asked if the County is limited to advertising within *The Ithaca Journal*. It was explained that depending on the position, advertising could be local, or a special "Utica-Binghamton-Elmira-Ithaca (UBEI) [now known as "Rocester-Binghamton-Elmira-Ithaca" [RBEI] advertising package may be purchased that would include several publications (three-days in *The Ithaca Journal* and a Sunday publication in other regions; in addition local Pennysavers and web-based advertising are utilized. In the event an opening occurs for a department head or administrator, the search is extended further. Ms. Fitzpatrick said advertising in newspapers such as the *New York Times* has not been shown to be effective enough to justify the high cost.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the medical exam costs are for necessary examinations upon hiring of an individual (medical, psychological, drug and alcohol testing for particular positions, etc.). Ms. Kiefer said it is a large increase and inquired whether it is anticipated to stay at this level. Ms. Fitzpatrick said there has been some turnover in some titles and believes the 2007 figure to be a reasonable forecast. The funds expended for municipalities were provided as well.

Training Program

Cultural Competency

Ms. Fitzpatrick shared information regarding the Cultural Competency training for Department Heads and Managers to develop, maintain, and lead a culturally competent county organization. Ms. Martel-Moore and Mrs. McBean-Clairborne worked together with TFC Associates to develop a series of workshops designed to continue and expand training begun last year; it will begin in 2008 and continue into 2009. Managers would receive the same content that Department Heads did last year, including content that defines a culturally competent organization. It is hoped to continue the training onto the larger employee base. In response to Mr. Burbank's question, Ms. Fitzpatrick said a bid request was not made as this is a continuation of training begun in 2007. Ms. Kiefer asked if there is an hourly rate charged; Ms. Fitzpatrick said it would depend of the service but she believes it to be approximately \$150 per hour for certain services provided. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said the training would provide the opportunity for all to be on the same platform.

Civil Service Training

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported that Steve Estes is proposing a Civil Service Training Curriculum that would be provided to Supervisors in the organization. There will be four workshops that provide Civil Service training and the tools necessary for Supervisors to work through progressive discipline and doing performance reviews during employee probationary periods.

Core Training

This training is moving forward; at the next Department Head meeting a request will be made to nominate supervisors from departments to participate in the first group. This group would then proceed through several levels of training.

Workplace Violence Prevention

Ms. Fitzpatrick has spoken to CSEA staff member Lynnet Witherell, a meeting is set for September 10th to discuss work on workplace-violence prevention that Ms. Witherell has undertaken in Schuyler County. Ms. Fitzpatrick noted she would be reviewing some material that is being sent and that Ms. Witherell would be an available resource partner. She thanked Ms. DeMarco for suggesting Ms. Witherell.

Ms. Fitzpatrick said she had initially requested to be allowed to go to bid for an initial assessment, however, she has withdrawn that request. She explained the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan has been developed by the County. There are also components for training that are mandated, as well as an assessment to be completed. Ms. Witherell will address her experiences with Schuyler County, which may prove beneficial.

Wellness – Step-Up Program

Ms. Kominos reported the Step-Up Program started several days ago. This eight-week program is sponsored by Excellus at no cost to the County and is designed to increase physical activity and servings of fruits and vegetables. All County employees were provided with information and pedometers, whether or not they decided to participate in the online web-based program. Following a pilot program with the Wellness Committee members, department heads were asked to find team captains who would offer to coordinate the program. Participants then joined teams and daily log on and report their steps, and fruit/vegetable intake and receive a correlating score. The winner at the end of the program will receive a free lunch. Other teams completing the eight-week program will receive prizes through raffles, and the recording process may continue after the initial contest portion is complete. All employees were notified of the program via e-mail, for those employees without e-mail, such as highway employees and corrections officers, staff members act as a contact.

Mr. Burbank inquired whether there are other wellness initiatives undertaken by the Wellness Committee. He was informed there is a fitness club reimbursement available to employees. He asked if there is consideration given to place fitness equipment within County-owned buildings. Ms. Fitzpatrick said the County attorney and her position has been not to allow it due to the Workers Compensation liability reasons; even if used not on work time the County would be liable. She said the County would reimburse employees \$100 per six-month membership, without restriction of location, for County employees otherwise eligible for benefits. Mr. Burbank suggested the County review the matter as it may provide employees the ability to become healthier, particularly if they are unable to go to a sports club. For example, a treadmill at a worksite could be used at lunchtime. He said the experience with the City providing equipment has not indicated a liability problem.

It was noted that Legislators had not received notice of the StepUp program; Ms. Kominos provided pedometers and information to Committee members and will provide the same to all Legislators. Upon learning that there are presently 153 of our 750 employees participating, on nineteen teams, Mrs. McBean-Clairborne suggested there be posters throughout the organization encouraging participation.

Ms. Fitzpatrick clarified for Mr. Dennis that to require an individual to become physically fit would need to be contained within a contract. In public employment if an employee has medical problems that make them unable to do the function required of the position, with or without special accommodation, there is no recourse available as an employer. It was noted job descriptions have a very broad spectrum and are not specific regarding physical capability. Mr. Dennis said whatever can be done to assist employees to be more healthy is to everyone's benefits.

Discussion Regarding City of Ithaca Pay Scale

Ms. Kiefer spoke of a radio interview she heard during which Mayor Peterson spoke of the inconsistencies in pay scales at the City of Ithaca. It was stated that some staff wages are higher than that of their supervisors. The City is making use of the CSEA study on the market; Ms. Kiefer thought it might be worth the County looking at the study as well to provide current information.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said the problem of inequity lies only with the City's managerial positions; it would require between ten to twenty percent increases in pay scales to resolve the matter. This past year managers received a three percent increase. She explained that newly hired deputies are coming in at a higher entry-level salary than the present manager. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne inquired if there is a managerial team discussing levels with the County. Ms. Fitzpatrick said this spring she had been asked to provide background on how the Management and Confidential staff salaries were set. Several years ago the Confidential staff, by resolution, asked to travel with the benefits received by the White Collar employees. With regard to Management, the previous delegates who were in conversation previously are no longer here: Kathy Leinthall who is retired, Joe Vitale who has resigned, and another representative has left. An offer to meet with the remaining members last spring resulted in their response to meet later in the fall of 2008. Ms. Grinnel-Crosby had sent out a request to seek volunteers to meet with the County but thus far has not had any responses. Mr. Dennis said that unless there is a commitment to actively discuss matters there is not a need to have meetings and take up staff time. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne shared some of the items needing to be discussed at the City of Ithaca, and that some discussions occurring are positive; she said the conversations that are not necessarily salary-based can be successful. Mr. Dennis said that perhaps the new County Administrator should be asked for input regarding management proposals.

Ms. Fitzpatrick inquired how many managers were employed at the City; Mrs. McBean-Clairborne was not certain of the exact numbers. Ms. Fitzpatrick said with regard to the County, the Legislature has the right to bargain or not, they are the body that determines the salary levels and benefits for managers. In her experience, managers are normally offered at least the same as the white collar unit. The question is whether management can assume to get the same, and if not, what are the criteria to set salaries (financial solvency of the County, CPI, etc.). Most years it has been the same as white collar, however there have been situations where they did not receive the same salary increase, and have had changes imposed in health insurance prior to the present time through negotiations.

Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Cultural Competency Training – Continued

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stated that Ms. Fitzpatrick had described the planned training workshops and noted the bulk of the funds for the training would be coming from the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion (WDIC) budget. The total cost of the cultural competency training is approximately \$14,000, and WDIC will encumber funds for the training; the balance of the expense would be covered by the Personnel Department. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stated WDIC feels strongly that the training would benefit all staff.

2007 Rollover

The Committee was informed that WDIC has requested \$8,547 in rollover funds for use in 2009; the 2008 balance is \$13,912. Ms. Kiefer said during a Government Operations Committee meeting she had inquired whether the WDIC funds could be put back into the general fund balance. Given this information she has a better understanding of how the funds are being spent. Ms. Kiefer then stated confusion on the process of utilizing the funds as they had previously been with Personnel Department and now are under the Legislative Clerk's office. It was explained that approval of funding goes first through WDIC and then to Human Resources Committee; if required by policy, at time the Legislature

would have to approve. It was noted the rollover request form was for information only; no action is required.

Resolution – Award of Grant – The Grandmother’s Project

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne stated the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee (WDIC) felt strongly that a grant should be provided for this project that embraces the opportunity to support the purpose, policy, and function of the WDIC in furthering the diversity and inclusion initiatives. She said it is a very unique event that is an amazing and inclusive diverse opportunity, including teachings of tolerance and diversity. It was noted that due to funding cycles not meeting the need of the event and the fact that the entire function was not without a charge, the project was not able to receive any Celebrations tourism funding. She apologized for not being able to attend the previous meeting to discuss the resolution. She spoke of the grandmothers holding many educational activities that would spread respect and inclusion that would be occurring in various parts of the county. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said the Committee felt it was a small amount to spend that would embrace much of the County’s viewpoint on diversity and inclusion and encouraged support of the resolution by members of the Legislature.

Ms. Kiefer appreciated the additional information, however, would still like to see an actual budget to determine where funding is being spent and noted one had not been presented for tourism funding consideration. She expressed concern regarding spending money that could confound church and state issues. She said the proposed activities described speak of prayer and the importance of spirituality, but she doesn’t know where it appears within the program and would like clarification. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of spirituality and religion and church and state are completely different things. Teachings about respect oftentimes encounters talk around spirituality, respect for different lives, and diversity. Although she does not know the specifics regarding references to prayer, she believes that prayer in this case is more getting in touch with one self. She spoke of the Tutello festival that would be taking place September 22nd including prayer that joins individuals around a fire and getting in touch with ones thoughts for healing. She believes many items come before the Legislature that are not complete, however given the magnitude of this event she would like approval of the concept of bringing the indigenous grandmothers here.

Mr. Burbank spoke of recognizing the size of the event and inquired who is the sponsor of the event and how the grant would fit into the budget. The Committee was informed the local group is able to utilize a California-based not-for-profit firm to provide tax-exempt donation status for the event. The funds for the event have been raised through fundraising events taking place. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said it is a community-based women’s group undertaking total responsibility for the event; it is a grassroots fund-raising effort making the event possible and as such did not want any one sponsor tied to it, although any donations are being accepted.

Mr. Dennis asked if any other governmental agencies have provided a sponsorship; Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said there was going to be a request from the Town of Groton, and that various departments within the City of Ithaca have made donations, and school districts have also sponsored the event.

Mr. Burbank said the Tutello festival is not funded by the Town of Ithaca, but rather, an adjacent celebration. In response to a question it was noted the actual coordination of the event is being done primarily by Janet Jacobs Fish and Sidney Moonchild, members of Women’s Gathering of Groton.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne expressed a desire that the County support such a large event such as this.

Ms. Kiefer said she would need a budget and would like to know what the public money would be spent on. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said a portion of an event could be designated to a particular event if desired.

It was MOVED by Mrs. McBean-Clairborne to recommend approval of the following resolution to the full Legislature for approval. MOTION FAILED FOR LACK OF A SECOND.

Mr. Dennis said he would not support the resolution and suggested bringing it to the full Legislature as a member-filed. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said if she could not get Committee approval she did not feel it appropriate to take to the Legislature. Mr. Burbank said he believed he could support it if he saw a budget and recognition that grants of this nature have been passed before. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne spoke of the uniqueness of the event; she believes that the Diversity Consortium would approve a grant to the event. She feels it is a large opportunity for the Legislature to move forward towards diversity and inclusion throughout the County but if others do not agree she will not bring it forward.

RESOLUTION NO. – AWARD OF GRANT – THE GRANDMOTHERS PROJECT

WHEREAS, Women’s Gathering of Groton is hosting a week-long event in October 2008, to bring The Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, women who come together from the Artic Circle, North, South, and Central America, Africa, and Asia, and

WHEREAS, The Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers are women with a solidarity creating a network to rebalance and educate the world concerning the fundamental laws of nature and original teachings based on respect for all life, and

WHEREAS, as part of their stay in Tompkins County they will be meeting with men, women, and children from throughout Tompkins County and surrounding areas to assist in healing differences and educate those attending their events on the importance of diversity, and

WHEREAS, as part of the Tompkins County Diversity Statement, Tompkins County acknowledges the importance of:

- awareness, understanding, and education regarding diversity issues;
- zero tolerance for expressions of discrimination, bias, harassment, or negative stereotyping toward any person or group

, and

WHEREAS, the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Committee embraces this opportunity/event as one that supports the purpose, policy and function of this committee in furthering the diversity and inclusion initiatives in Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, funds are available in the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion budget to further this work, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion and the Human Resources Committees, That the following grant is hereby approved:

Women’s Gathering of Groton The Grandmothers Project \$1,000

RESOLVED, further, That the County Administrator or designee shall be authorized to sign any documents related to the aforementioned projects.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Approval of Minutes of August 7, 2008

Human Resources Committee
September 4, 2008

It was MOVED by Ms. Kiefer, seconded by Mr. Burbank, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of August 7, 2008, as amended. MINUTES APPROVED.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Fuller, TC Legislature Office