

# WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL

DATE: MARCH 7, 2012

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS CONOVER  
KENNY  
SOKOL  
MERLINO  
TAYLOR  
STRAINER  
DICKINSON  
GIRARD  
MASON

OTHERS PRESENT:

DANIEL G. STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
MARTIN AUFFREDOU, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISORS BENTLEY  
THOMAS  
WOOD  
PAT AUER, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH  
AMY DREXEL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES  
JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
BUD YORK, WARREN COUNTY SHERIFF  
JONATHAN ALEXANDER, *THE POST STAR*  
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

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Mr. Conover called the meeting of the Personnel Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the prior Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Commencing the agenda review with Section III Item 1, Mr. Conover outlined a request from the Criminal Justice Committee, District Attorney's Office, to create and fill the position of Investigator (part-time), annual salary not to exceed \$15,000, effective March 19, 2012; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization. He noted that the position was not mandated, but would receive 100% State reimbursement through the BYRNE JAG grant.

Motion was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Conover announced that Item 2 consisted of a request from the Public Safety Committee, Sheriff & Communications, to fill the vacant position of Cook Manager, base salary (first year) of \$34,648, due to retirement and authorize backfilling of any vacancies created as a result of promotion. He advised the position was not mandated and received no reimbursement.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Continuing, Mr. Conover pointed out that Agenda Items 3A-D consisted of requests from the Public Works Committee, Department of Public Works (DPW). Item 3A, he apprised, included a request to fill the vacant position of Fish Management Specialist, annual salary to be determined subsequent to Administrative review of non-union position salaries, due to resignation, and authorize backfilling of any vacancies created as a result of promotion. Mr. Conover stated that the position was not mandated and received no reimbursement. The Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is attached.

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Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson and seconded by Mr. Mason to approve the request.

Mr. Conover pointed out that the salary associated with the Fish Management Specialist position was to be determined based upon Administrative review of non-union position salaries and he questioned whether it would be more appropriate to authorize filling of the position at the current salary level which could be adjusted when, and if, the Administrator's suggestions were accepted. Paul Dusek, County Administrator, confirmed that this was one of the positions addressed in his Administrative review and he said the Committee might consider deferring discussion on the position until after the discussion of the salary review, later in the meeting.

When asked for additional information on the position, Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of Public Works, advised that the Fish Management Specialist was a critical position to the Fish Hatchery and they were currently adjusting staff schedules to cover the vacancy. He said his hope was that during the process of the Administrative review, a salary range would be assigned that could be adjusted during the interview process to provide appropriate salary levels to candidates, commensurate with education and experience. Mr. Tennyson suggested a salary range of \$37,000 to \$42,000, advising that the salary differential over the current level was available within the 2012 DPW Budget. He noted that reductions and adjustments to other positions had been made since the start of the year, leading to available funds of approximately \$16,000.

Mr. Dusek noted that the existing salary for the Fish Management Specialist position was \$35,557 and he advised that the Administrative salary review suggested an increase of \$2,500, raising the salary total to \$38,057.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Girard, Mr. Tennyson stated that the position had been held by a person with three years tenure with the County, who had decided to leave in favor of a better job opportunity with a higher salary. He added that in order to qualify for the position, candidates had to meet certain education, degree and experience qualifications and in comparing the current salary to other area hatchery facilities, he had found the amount to be lower than most. Mr. Tennyson said a higher salary range was desired as it would allow them to offer a competitive salary while allowing the flexibility to attract candidates and offer compensation based on education and experience, without over, or under, paying. Mr. Dusek apprised that he was not opposed to Mr. Tennyson's request and noted that the highest salary increase offered in the Administrators review was \$2,500 as that was the cap used during the process; however, he added, he concurred that they might have to offer more than this amount to attract the appropriate person for the position and he felt a salary range would allow Mr. Tennyson to accomplish this and offer compensation according to the experience level of the applicant.

Following further discussion on the matter, the aforementioned motion was amended to provide approval to fill the Fish Management Specialist position with an annual salary range of \$37,000 to \$42,000, based on education and experience.

Mr. Conover called the question and the motion was carried unanimously, thereby authorizing the necessary resolution for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Resuming the agenda review with Item 3B, Mr. Conover noted a request to fill the vacant position of Motor Equipment Operator (MEO) Medium #21, base salary (first year) of \$29,031, Grade 7, due to retirement and authorize backfilling of any vacancies created as a result of promotion. He said the position was not mandated and received no reimbursement.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to approve the request and authorize the necessary resolution for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Agenda Item 3C, Mr. Conover announced, included a request to create and fill the position of MEO Medium #24, base salary (first year) of \$29,031, Grade 7, and delete the position of Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) #10, Grade 8,

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effective March 19, 2012, as well as to authorize backfilling of any vacancies created as a result of promotion; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Conover apprised that Item 3D consisted of a request to reallocate the position of Sign Maintenance Supervisor from a Grade 10 to a Grade 15 and increase the attached salary from \$40,775 to \$45,198; thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization.

Mr. Tennyson explained that due to the level of responsibility and knowledge associated with the position, he had been very surprised to discover that the Sign Maintenance Supervisor position was only listed at a Grade 10. He commented that this position was responsible for maintaining the County Highway sign inventory, organizing work zones on highway construction projects and keeping up to date on all rules and regulations associated with the position. Mr. Tennyson added that the Sign Maintenance Supervisor regularly oversaw a staff of two, but that number was increased to a much higher number when organizing complicated work zones, such as those needed on road projects in the Town of Queensbury that required lane closures and flagging operations. He stated this request reflected his attempt to correct a position that had been listed at too low a grade and he noted that, as with the Fish Management Specialist position, the salary differential would be funded through the existing budget using funding retained by other position adjustments. Mr. Tennyson concluded that the increased Grade level would place this position one slot below the Highway foreman, raising it to a level commensurate with the knowledge and experience required.

Mr. Dusek apprised that he had previously discussed this request with Mr. Tennyson and said while he had initially been surprised by the salary increase requested, he had later come to the realization that the request was not unreasonable considering the level of responsibility associated with the position. He pointed out that the position in question was a bargaining unit position and he advised that in order to increase the position Grade, Union approval would be required.

Mr. Taylor questioned whether any education requirements were associated with the position and Mr. Tennyson replied in the negative, advising that the qualifications for the position were experience based.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Dickinson stated his support for the position change, stating that due to the significant amount of responsibility associated with the position, he felt the Committee should support Mr. Tennyson's request. Mr. Conover agreed, but reminded the Committee that Union approval would be required before the change could be made. Mr. Geraghty advised that he too supported the request as the Sign Maintenance Supervisor had to maintain an extensive knowledge of the laws and regulations that pertained to sign placement and were critical to highway operations; additionally, he noted that this person served as a valuable resource for many Town Highway Superintendents. Chairman Stec advised that he had discussed this issue with Mr. Tennyson and agreed that, although Union concurrence was required, the position should be adjusted if they were able to do so.

Mr. Strainer questioned why the Grade level had not been changed previously and Mr. Tennyson said the request had been raised in the past but was not approved; however he added, he was unsure whether the resistance had been on the part of the County or the Union. Mr. Tennyson advised that, in the past, the person in the position was technically being paid to work out-of-title as the work being done was more than what the Grade of the position called for. Mr. Strainer then asked if the salary increase was provided, would the position still receive a salary increase with all other Union positions in 2013 and Mr. Dusek responded that no increases were proposed for any Union positions as the current contract expired on December 31, 2012 and a new contract had not been approved. Mr. Dusek added that if a contract was secured, the position would be subject to the same salary increase as all other Union positions. He then

pointed out that Union negotiations were scheduled to be held later that day and this item could be discussed and possibly finalized in time for presentation at the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request to reallocate the position of Sign Maintenance Supervisor from a Grade 10 to a Grade 15 and increase the attached salary from \$40,775 to \$45,198, amending the Department's Table of Organization accordingly, contingent upon Union review and approval, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Resuming the agenda review with Item 4, Mr. Conover apprised of a request from the Social Services Committee, Countryside Adult Home, to fill the vacant position of Cleaner Full-Time, annual salary of \$23,706, Grade 2, due to retirement, as well as to backfill any vacancies created. He said this was a mandated, Union position that would receive 50% State reimbursement.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the previously mentioned request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Conover stated that agenda items 5A-C consisted of referrals from the County Administrator and he noted that items 5A and B would be addressed together. Item 5A, he expounded, consisted of a request to amend Local Law No. 3 of 1971, Establishing the Department of Personnel and Personnel Officer in the County of Warren, while Item 5B included a request to repeal Local Law No. 12 of 2006, Establishing a Department of Human Resources in Warren County.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Mason to approve both items 5A and 5B.

Mr. Dusek explained that these requests came as a result of the elimination of the Human Resources Department in the 2012 Budget. He continued that Local Law No. 12 of 2006, which established the Human Resources Department, should be repealed due to elimination of the Department, while an amendment to Local law No. 3 of 1971 would be necessary to include the additional duties that would be shifted from the Human Resources Department to the Personnel Officer. Mr. Dusek commented that the duties previously assumed by Human Resources had been redistributed to himself; Kathy Barrie, Personnel Officer; Amy Clute, Self-Insurance Administrator; and to the various Departments as deemed appropriate. He advised that in order to make these changes, two new Local Laws would be necessary and he introduced them as proposed Local Law No. 4 of 2012, "A Local Law Repealing Local Law No. 12 of 2006 - "A Local Law Establishing A Department of Human Resources in Warren County", and proposed Local Law No. 5 of 2012, "A Local Law Amending Local Law No. 3 of 1971 entitled A Local Law Establishing the Department of Personnel and Personnel Officer in the County of Warren". *Copies of both proposed Local Laws were distributed to the Committee members and copies are also on file with the minutes.* Mr. Dusek provided a brief overview of the documents for the Committee's benefit.

Mr. Dusek stated that he had discussed the additions to the duties of the Personnel Officer at length with Mrs. Barrie and commended her for taking the initiative to accept the duties when the Human Resources Department was abolished. He noted there was one position remaining in the Human Resources Department, that of a Secretary (actual title is Administrative Assistant), and the person filling said position intended to maintain it until her upcoming retirement. Mr. Dusek reminded the Committee that the Human Resources Director position had been eliminated with the intention of replacing it with a lower paid Generalist position. He expounded that they had since decided to incorporate the Generalist position under the Personnel Department, when it was filled, to provide appropriate support staff for the duties assumed, as well as to organize the Department in a manner that allowed for staff advancement and promotion. Mr. Dusek concluded that through the work distribution process, himself, Ms. Barrie and Ms. Clute were

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making a consolidated effort to assume the responsibilities previously addressed by the Human Resources Department at a lower cost, which he felt would serve the County very well.

Mr. Taylor opined that this was a very well thought out plan and said he felt this was the right direction for the County to proceed in. Mr. Girard countered that he had not been in favor of eliminating the Human Resources Department due to the size of the County Budget and the number of staff employed; he added that he did not think the considerable efforts being made to compensate for the lost position were worth the approximately \$15,000 savings attained, especially in light of the loss of specialized attention previously provided to new employees by the Human Resources Director. He concluded that it seemed the Departmental elimination had been a step in the wrong direction for Warren County and it remained to be seen whether this was a sensible decision. Mr. Dusek responded that while he appreciated and understood Mr. Girard's position on the matter, he felt the consolidated effort would work well to meet the County's needs. Additionally, Mr. Dusek noted they were saving far more than the \$15,000 referred to by Mr. Girard as this figure would actually be closer to \$100,000 in salaries for both the Human Resources Director and the Secretary, once she retired, not including fringe benefits.

There being no further discussion on the matter, Mr. Conover called the question and the motion to approve agenda Items 5A and B was carried unanimously and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

Mr. Conover advised the final agenda item, 5C, called for discussion on non-union wage adjustments which he asked Mr. Dusek to speak on. *Copies of the Warren County Salary Study were distributed to the Committee members and a copy is also on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Dusek reminded the Committee that as part of the 2012 Budget negotiations they had set aside \$129,000 to be used for non-Union salary wage adjustments. He clarified that these monies were not intended to fund a standardized increase for all non-Union employees, but rather to fund increases to certain positions where deemed appropriate. Mr. Dusek said this consideration had been made in response to the fact that non-Union employees had not received a salary increase since 2009 and attention was needed to maintain competitive salary rates in order to retain staffing levels. He pointed out that although it was unlikely that employees would leave their positions during an economic downturn, when the job market recovered, they would be more likely to search for alternate job opportunities if the salaries weren't maintained, leading the County to lose valuable, experienced work staff. Mr. Dusek advised that a considerable amount of time and effort had been made by himself, Mr. Geraghty and JoAnn McKinstry, Assistant to the County Administrator, to develop the Warren County Salary Study document in order to compare current staff salaries to surrounding municipalities and determine average salary rates for similar positions. He said that meetings had also been held with each of the individual Department Heads to discuss this issue and advise of their mission which was to arrive at reasonable competitive salaries for all positions. Mr. Dusek stated that an extremely transparent process had been used to develop the Salary Study which they were happy to share with the general public and the media, and this was not typical practice for governmental procedures.

Mr. Dusek apprised that flat increase amounts or percentages had not been used in determining the salary adjustments, but they had incorporated a \$2,500 maximum increase per position. He said there were certain positions that actually warranted higher amounts, but this would serve as an immediate increase with further review to be made in the future when budgetary constraints allowed. He cited the previously discussed Fish Management Specialist position as a perfect example of this situation as although a \$2,500 salary increase had been cited for the position, it might not be possible to hire appropriately using that figure, thus necessitating further increases. Mr. Dusek noted that the Study included 130 non-Union positions, 60 of which had received no salary adjustments, as signified by the dash (-) icon in the "Difference" column. Another popular figure in the chart, he said was \$800, the amount attributed to those positions not deemed low enough to receive the full \$2,500 increase, but needing some kind of salary increase to maintain a competitive salary.

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The total amount to be expended for salary adjustments was \$123,950, Mr. Dusek said, which was well below the \$129,000 allocated and accomplished their mission of addressing the salary issues; he added that this figure represented a 1.7% increase and within the 2% tax cap increase. He noted that the totals provided reflected the cost to the County if the increases had been implemented at the start of the year; because this was not the case, he estimated the actual cost to the County for 2012 to be in the range of \$95,853. Mr. Dusek concluded that the Salary Study was not in its final form as more work could be done to massage the salary figures, but he said he felt this was a good start for the County to eliminate blanket increases and longevity pay in favor of instituting competitive wage rates.

Mr. Strainer asked if the total salary amounts reflected in the Salary Study represented the wage rates for a new employee and Mr. Dusek replied in the negative, advising that those figures were based on experienced, qualified personnel. He added that in new hire situations, they would re-evaluate the salaries and set them appropriately. Mr. Dusek reminded the Committee members that salary review and changes could only be made for non-bargaining unit employees as salaries for all bargaining unit positions were set according to their respective Union contract.

Mr. Taylor noted there were a few areas where the salaries currently being paid were higher than surrounding Counties and he asked how those would be addressed. Mr. Dusek replied that they did not wish to reduce any salaries, but intended to avoid any salary increases for those positions until it became necessary to increase them to a level competitive with the current job market.

Mr. Conover recommended that the Committee members review the Salary Study in depth at their leisure and contact Mr. Dusek with any questions they might have; he added that the issue would be discussed further at a future meeting, following which the Committee would deliberate on whether to implement the salary increases suggested.

There being no further business to come before the Personnel Committee, on motion made by Mr. Dickinson and seconded by Mr. Sokol, Mr. Conover adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Deputy Clerk of the Board