

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL

DATE: AUGUST 6, 2014

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR  
KENNY  
DICKINSON  
GIRARD  
VANSELOW  
WOOD  
SIMPSON

OTHERS PRESENT:

GRETCHEN STEFFAN, COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR  
PATRICIA NENNINGER, PERSONNEL OFFICER  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
MARTIN AUFFREDOU, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
FRANK THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS SOKOL  
MERLINO

SUPERVISORS BROCK  
CONOVER  
FRASIER  
MCDEVITT  
MONROE  
SEEBER  
STROUGH  
WESTCOTT

ROBERT IUSI, DIRECTOR, PROBATION  
JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
MIKE SWAN, TREASURER  
JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
BUD YORK, SHERIFF  
ROB YORK, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*  
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

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

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

Copies of the Personnel Agenda were distributed to the Committee members and a copy of same is on file with the meeting minutes.

Commencing the Agenda review with Section III, Action Agenda, Mr. Taylor advised Items 1A-C consisted of requests from the Human Resources Department. Item 1A, he said included a request to extend the employment of Temporary HR/Civil Service Assistant Shauna Newman for an additional three months, commencing August 20, 2014. Mr. Taylor advised that funding for the additional salary cost was not available within the existing budget; therefore, he added, a transfer from the Contingent Fund totaling \$9,179.88 was requested.

Gretchen Steffan, County Human Resources Director, commented that Ms. Newman was key to the current operation of the office, greeting visitors and assisting with a number of other office functions. She said she would greatly appreciate the authority to extend the temporary term of the position and noted that she planned to request that it be made permanent through the 2015 budgeting process.

Mr. Simpson questioned the current status of the Contingent Fund and Mr. Thomas, speaking as Budget Officer, advised there was about \$84,000 remaining.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

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Mr. Taylor advised Item 1B included a request to renew the existing contract with People Pay Systems (*dba NEC/National Employers Council, Inc.*) to provide assistance with administration of the unemployment insurance program and to represent Warren County for all claim hearings at a cost of \$2,614.40

Motion was made by Mr. Girard, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Moving on to Item 1C, privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Steffan to provide a status report on the Corrections Officer hiring process. Ms. Steffan distributed a document entitled "2014 Correction Officer Hiring Process Summary", *a copy of which is on file with the meeting minutes*, which provided a detailed summary of the hiring process. She advised that of the 135 individuals who had applied to take the Civil Service examination for the Corrections Officer positions, 99 had passed and qualified for the physical agility testing. Ms. Steffan explained that the physical agility testing included requirements such as the ability to drag a 165 pound training dummy through an obstacle course, as well as the ability to do a specified number of pushups, based on sex and age, and run 300 meters within a designated time frame. She concluded that 62 people had passed the physical agility testing, following which 14 people had been removed from the eligible list for various reasons, leaving a pool of 48 candidates subject to background checks.

Mr. Taylor advised Agenda Item 2 pertained to a request from the County Treasurer to create the full-time position of Junior Accountant-Temp at a rate of \$24.04 per hour effective August 18, 2014 to cover a vacancy during FMLA (*Family Medical Leave Act*) leave; he noted that funding was available for the salary in the Treasurer's Salaries-Part Time Budget Code.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Mr. Taylor noted Agenda Item 3 included a referral from the Criminal Justice Committee, *Probation*, requesting authorization for Samantha Mason, Probation Assistant, to enroll in the job-related course entitled "Data Utilization in Criminal Justice" to be taken at the University at Albany, School of Criminal Justice, during a term commencing in August of 2014 and terminating in December of 2014 at a cost of \$1,500. He pointed out that this course was one of the requirements for Ms. Mason to achieve her Masters Degree in Criminal Justice and, if the request was approved, she would be due reimbursement for 50% of the course costs upon completion with a grade of "C", or its equivalent, or better.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Mr. Taylor advised Agenda Item 4 pertained to a referral from the Social Services Committee, *Department of Social Services*, concerning the Reallocation Committee's recommendations regarding Caseworker positions in the Department of Social Services; privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Steffan to address this item.

Ms. Steffan announced she actually had two Reallocation Committee recommendations to discuss, one that pertained to the Department of Social Services (*DSS*) and was included in the Agenda packet, and another relating to the Payroll Supervisor position in the Treasurer's Office, which she had handed out at the beginning of the meeting; *copies of both recommendations are on file with the meeting minutes*. She explained that the Reallocation Committee had been established through the CSEA Contract which provided the opportunity for any Department Head with interest in having a position reclassified or reallocated to bring said position(s) before the Reallocation Committee in May of each year for consideration. Ms. Steffan advised the membership of the Reallocation Committee contained a balance of CSEA members and administration; she noted that this year's membership included Supervisor

Taylor; Paul Dusek, County Administrator; herself; and CSEA representatives.

With regards to the DSS reallocation suggestions, Ms. Steffan advised that over the last three years eleven Caseworker positions had been vacated, which was troubling because these positions required a considerable amount of training. She said it appeared that only three of these staff members had gone on to pursue other interests, while the other eight had left for higher paying positions in the Social Services or Probation fields either in Warren County or another surrounding county. Ms. Steffan pointed out that according to this trend, Warren County was spending time and money to train individuals for Caseworker positions, only to lose the staff to other departments or counties. In an attempt to address this issue, she advised the Reallocation Committee had reviewed the exit interviews performed, most of which seemed to indicate salary concerns, and they had gathered information about the salaries provided for similar positions by other counties within a driveable distance. Following this research, Ms. Steffan advised they had been able to confirm that Warren County was offering the lowest salary rates for Caseworker positions of the counties researched. She said that as part of their review the Reallocation Committee had also considered career progression and the amount of training required for the Caseworker staff to be prepared to work independently; she added they had found that the County was investing a tremendous amount of resources into the training process and because the salary rates were lower than surrounding counties, the risk of losing these trained individuals was higher.

Ms. Steffan advised the Reallocation Committee had considered various scenarios about how best to rectify this situation, and had ultimately decided upon the recommendation provided which proposed to increase the grade levels for the Caseworker positions, and commensurately, the salary would be increased, as well. She pointed out that the proposal included the following increases:

Caseworker -	Increase from Grade 14 ( <i>Annual Base Salary \$36,093</i> ) Increase to Grade 16 ( <i>Annual Base Salary \$38,239</i> )
Senior Caseworker -	Increase from Grade 15 ( <i>Annual Base Salary \$36,738</i> ) Increase to Grade 18, Step 2 ( <i>Annual Base Salary \$42,200</i> )
Case B Supervisor -	Increase from Grade 17 ( <i>Annual \$46,703</i> ) Increase to Grade 20, Step 5 ( <i>Annual Base Salary \$50,871</i> )

Ms. Steffan apprised that by changing the grade scheme for these positions, higher level positions which had obtained the most training would receive higher compensation, at a level more on par with what was paid to Probation Officers, with the hope that employees would be dissuaded from changing positions because the difference in compensation was slight. She then proceeded to review the remaining documentation included in the agenda packet which provided charts relaying the current salary costs as opposed to the costs of the projected increases associated with the grade changes, as well as other charts reflecting the salaries offered by Warren County in comparison to other counties located within a driveable distance. Ms. Steffan pointed out that the total cost for the grade change proposal was \$129,298.59; however, she added, when the 62% State/Federal reimbursements were factored in, the cost to the County was reduced to \$49,133.47. With respect to the 62% reimbursement rate used, Ms. Steffan explained that the reimbursement rates varied by position and she had used the 62% figure as a conservative average for comparison purposes. She concluded that the Reallocation Committee was requesting approval of their proposal so that it could be referred to the Finance Committee for approval, and then to the Budget Committee for final approval and inclusion in the 2015 Budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Vanselow and seconded by Mr. Dickinson to approve the recommendations of the Reallocation Committee, as presented.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Girard regarding Caseworker staff turnover, Ms. Steffan reiterated that eleven caseworker positions had been vacated over the last three years and she noted that figure had recently increased to twelve when the DSS had lost a Caseworker to the Probation

Department last month. Mr. Girard pointed out that raising salaries would not necessarily prevent staff turnover and he questioned whether it was sensible to incur additional expenses in an attempt to prevent something the County really had no control over. Ms. Steffan responded that the amount of time and money spent on Caseworker training was a considerable factor in this matter; she added that there was an initial training cost of \$2,500, followed by a considerable amount of time training with supervisory staff. She said new Caseworker positions required a considerable amount of both State mandated and internal training and the feedback she had received from DSS staff indicated the supervisory staff were spending a considerable amount of time orienting new Caseworkers which affected their ability to complete tasks in a timely manner. Ms. Steffan stated that, for organizational purposes, it was better to have more trained people on staff at a senior level than to have more entry level staff requiring training. She advised that although it was unlikely they would ever eliminate staff turnover, the proposal presented would help to significantly reduce it.

Ms. Seeber questioned whether key DSS staff had been involved in the Reallocation Committee's review and Ms. Steffan replied affirmatively, noting that, prior to her retirement, Suzanne Wheeler, former DSS Commissioner, had been in favor of the proposal; she added that Maureen Schmidt, Deputy DSS Commissioner, had also been involved in the process and had expressed her optimism with the prospects of the plan. Patricia Nenninger, Personnel Officer, concurred there had been involvement with key DSS staff throughout the review and had advised their feelings that this plan would have positive effects in terms of morale, professional recognition and staff retention.

Following a brief discussion, Mr. Taylor called the question and the aforementioned motion was carried by unanimous vote to approve the recommendations of the Reallocation Committee and refer same to the Finance Committee.

Ms. Steffan reminded the Committee that she had a second recommendation from the Reallocation Committee to present, pertaining to the Payroll Supervisor position in the Treasurer's Office. She advised that at the request of the County Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, the Reallocation Committee had evaluated the Payroll Supervisors duties and salary, with the goal of the evaluation being to potentially upgrade the position and benchmark it within the CSEA salary grading system at a level comparable to other positions requiring similar skills and qualifications. Ms. Steffan recalled that the Committee had previously considered and approved a request to reclassify a Payroll Clerk position in the Treasurer's Office to a Payroll Technician at a higher grade level appropriate with the responsibilities of the position. She advised the Reallocation Committee had reviewed the position and gathered local and regional salary data from both private and public entities for salary benchmarking, leading them to subsequently recommend that the position grade be increased from a Grade 16 (*Annual Salary of \$38,239; Current Incumbent Salary \$44,602*) to a Grade 18 (*Base Annual Salary of \$40,973 - Incumbent Salary; Projected Incumbent Salary \$47,754*). Ms. Steffan said that in accordance with the CSEA contract, this was an appropriate increase as the Payroll Supervisor position requires a certain degree and several years of experience; she added that, once again, the Reallocation Committee was requesting approval of their proposal so that it could be referred to the Finance Committee for approval, and then to the Budget Committee for final approval and inclusion in the 2015 Budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Vanselow and seconded by Mr. Dickinson to approve the recommendation made by the Reallocation Committee.

Ms. Wood expressed her growing discomfort with this process as, historically, the Committee would be provided with a copy of the salary study in advance and provided with the opportunity for review, as had been the case with the recommendations for the DSS Caseworker positions. She stated she would appreciate more time to review and consider this recommendation before making a decision.

Mr. Dusek said he appreciated the point Ms. Wood had made; he added that there was no rush to approve the recommendation and it could certainly be postponed. Mr. Dusek assured that they would

be more diligent in getting this information out in a more timely fashion to provide ample opportunity for review. Ms. Steffan confirmed she would provide the information relating to the salary study.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and carried unanimously to table the request to approve recommendations made by the Reallocation Committee relating to the Payroll Supervisor position in the Treasurer's Office.

Resuming the agenda review with Item 5, Mr. Taylor presented a referral from the Support Services Committee, *Clerk of the Board*, requesting to amend the Table of Organization to abolish the position of Legislative Office Specialist #3, *Annual Salary \$34,680*, and create the position of Assistant Secretary to the Clerk of the Board, *Annual Salary of \$34,680*, effective August 15, 2014.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Ms. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 11<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Martin Auffredou, County Attorney, left the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Mr. Taylor commented Agenda Item 6 pertained to requests/items to be discussed by the County Administrator. Mr. Dusek stated that he had been out of the office and he would defer to JoAnn McKinstry, Assistant to the County Administrator, in this case because she was more knowledgeable about the request. Mrs. McKinstry explained they were seeking approval to waive Section I.B.3 of the Travel Policy as it related to compliance with the GSA (*General Services Administration*) policy for attendance at the 2014 NYSAC (*New York State Association of Counties*) Seminar. She further explained there were three hotels in the area of the Seminar offering rooms at the GSA rate, two of which were sold out; the third, she added, offered a GSA rate for the room but not for the meals, which would be over the GSA rate. Mrs. McKinstry advised there were non-GSA rate rooms available at the hotel where the Seminar was being held but they would exceed the GSA rate by about \$100 per person. She concluded that they were requesting that Section I.B.3 of the Travel Policy be waived so that they could stay at the Seminar location in the same hotel as their peers.

Mr. Kenny questioned how many people would be attending the NYSAC Seminar and Mr. Dusek responded that so far, it was only himself and Mrs. McKinstry. He added that the Seminar was open to all members of the Board of Supervisors, as well, but none had advised of their intent to attend as of yet.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Ms. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request to waive Section I.B.3 of the Travel Policy as it related to compliance with the GSA policy for attendance at the 2014 Fall NYSAC Seminar and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 15<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Mr. Taylor pointed out Item IV, Vacancies Filled, which provided a reporting of the positions filled since the last Personnel Committee meeting, consisting of the following:

**Public Health**

1. Public Health Nurse #25, *Grade 21, Annual Base Salary \$44,783; Budgeted Salary \$46,016*, due to retirement. This a non-mandated, Union position which receives 100% reimbursement from the billing of various insurances.

**Social Services**

1. Social Services Attorney, *Annual Salary \$73,000; Budgeted Salary \$66,940*, due to resignation. This is a mandated, non-Union position which receives 50% Federal and 25% State reimbursements.
2. Sr. Social Welfare Examiner #6, *Grade 11, Annual Base Salary \$33,687; Budgeted Salary \$41,673*, due to promotion. This is a mandated, Union position which receives 50% Federal and 25% State reimbursements.

3. Social Welfare Examiner #21, *Grade 8, Annual Base Salary \$30,835; Budgeted Salary \$38,944*, due to retirement. This is a mandated, Union position which receives 50% Federal and 25% State reimbursement.
4. Social Welfare Examiner #40, *Grade 8, Annual Base Salary \$30,835; Budgeted Salary \$32,820*, due to resignation. This is a mandated, Union position which receives 50% Federal and 25% State reimbursement.
5. Social Welfare Examiner #41, *Grade 8, Annual Base Salary \$30,835; Budgeted Salary \$40,435*, due to retirement. This is a mandated, Union position which receives 50% Federal and 25% State reimbursement.

**Treasurer**

1. Payroll Technician, *Grade 10, Annual Base Salary \$33,166; Budgeted Salary \$33,166*, due to resignation (position title created by reclassification of Payroll Clerk position effective June 23, 2014 - position created with Annual Base Salary of \$33,166). This is a non-mandated, Union position which does not receive any reimbursements.

With reference to the forms submitted for the Department of Social Services positions, Ms. Steffan pointed out a discrepancy where a "Local" share of 25% was reflected under the reimbursements section; she explained that the positions were not completely State/Federally funded and that this was actually the County's cost for the position.

Concluding the Agenda review, Mr. Taylor pointed out the Pending Items section which included one item relating to the County Attorney presenting suggested revisions to the proposed Warren County Ethics Law which was presented at the May 20<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting and then referred back to the Personnel Committee for review and revision. Mr. Dusek advised Mr. Auffredou had been called back to his Office and was not present to speak on the matter; however, he noted, before leaving, Mr. Auffredou had noted that he was still working on the proposed revisions.

With regards to the revised Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form being used, Ms. Wood noted that the form included a section for the Human Resources Director to complete and she questioned whether the same should be provided for the Personnel Officer to sign off on the Civil Service aspects of a position, as well. Mr. Dusek responded that they had considered this and decided not to include it as the Personnel Officer would not be able to make any determinations until they knew who would be filling the vacant position and that they met all necessary qualifications. He pointed out that the form did include a notation indicating "*Candidate's qualifications must be approved by Personnel Officer prior to hiring*".

Mr. Monroe advised he had talked to several other supervisors about the proposed Ethics Law and had found their opinion to be that it was better to follow the State's Ethics Law rather than to adopt another form of this type of Law at the County-level, which may cause conflict and confusion, unless there were serious gaps that needed to be addressed. Mr. Dusek recommended that this idea be relayed to Mr. Auffredou who could render an opinion on the suggestion at the next Committee meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Personnel Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Ms. Wood, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 9:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Deputy Clerk of the Board