

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL

DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
KENNY
SOKOL
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 MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR MERLINO

SUPERVISORS BROCK
CONOVER
FRASIER
MONROE
SEEBER
STROUGH
WESTCOTT

MIKE SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER
JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
BUD YORK, SHERIFF
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Personnel Committee to order at 9:08 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Ms. Wood 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, Mr. Taylor announced Items 1A-C pertained to requests/items to be discussed by the Human Resources Director/Personnel Officer. Privilege of the floor was extended to Gretchen Steffan, County Human Resources Director, to begin Item 1A, presentation on Human Resources/Civil Service Administration Office staffing. Ms. Steffan noted that this Agenda Item was resultant of discussion held at the prior month's Personnel and Finance Committee meetings where requests were made to provide information relative to the staffing dynamics of the Human Resources/Civil Service Offices. She then proceeded to review a powerpoint presentation regarding the operations of the Offices, a copy of which is on file with the meeting minutes.

At the conclusion of Ms. Steffan's presentation, Mr. Westcott noted that the Human Resources/Civil Service Office was undertaking a considerable project to update their computer systems and he questioned how this work was proceeding. Ms. Steffan responded this was a big project which was made more difficult by the fact that they were experiencing problems with a lack of responsiveness from the software provider to the issues they faced. Mr. Westcott then asked if there might be an opportunity to reduce staffing in the Human Resources/Civil Service Office once the computer update project was complete and Ms. Steffan advised she was unsure. She said she had a long-term employee who could potentially retire in two years and because she could not predict what would happen in the future, having trained backup staffing was important. Ms. Steffan noted there was a common misconception that her Office only dealt with people, which was not accurate as their operations were actually quite technical, and required a plethora of clerical functions. She recalled that at the last Committee meeting she had reviewed the considerably involved process required to advertise, test and

fill the newly created Corrections Officer positions which included a number of manual procedures to be undertaken by various staff members. Ms. Steffan concluded that although she would like to indicate the staffing could eventually be reduced, she could not do so; she added that she would never ask for a position she did not feel was necessary.

Mr. Dickinson asked Ms. Steffan to expound upon the difficulties her Office was experiencing relative to software updates. Ms. Steffan advised the software provider had been unresponsive to their requests for clarification and assistance, leading them to submit complaints to the president of the corporation that developed the software. She commented that her Office had been doing their part to work on the data and reports generated to ensure the software patches installed worked correctly and she said this also required a considerable amount of assistance from the Information Technology Department.

Mr. Girard commented that Ms. Steffan's powerpoint presentation included a slide outlining the Organization Chart for the Human Service/Civil Service Office which portrayed a different structure than the County had used in the past, *with the Personnel Officer working under the supervision of the Human Resources Director instead of as two separate department heads*, and he questioned whether this structure was working well. Additionally, he asked specifically which support staff members were dedicated to the County Human Resources Director as opposed to the Personnel Officer. Ms. Steffan responded that the Department was a work in progress and she noted that when Patricia Nenninger, Personnel Officer, had first assumed her position, they had discussed the need to partner and work cooperatively as the scenario certainly allowed opportunity for conflict. She added that all of the staff in the Human Resources/Civil Service Office were aware of the need to work together and support each other in order to make the Department successful and they were working to resolve the issues faced.

Ms. Seeber commented that part of the County Human Resources Director's responsibilities included supervising the Civil Service Division. She noted that she had done some research and found that other counties organized their Human Resources and Civil Services Divisions differently and she questioned whether the current structure being used for Warren County was the most efficient manner for both Departments. Additionally, she said that in reviewing the Organization Chart presented by Ms. Steffan, she was somewhat confused as to which support staff worked with the Personnel Officer under the Civil Service Division and whether those staff reported directly to Mrs. Nenninger. Finally, Ms. Seeber stated that she had not seen anything in the presentation that related to the Performance Work Plan, which had been identified as an integral part of moving forward with the creation of the Human Resources Division, nor had she seen anything about the implementation of exit interviews which were also a main priority. Ms. Steffan responded that what Ms. Seeber referred to as "Performance Work Plan" was actually termed as "Performance Evaluation" or "Performance Management" and she said these tools had been implemented for the Human Resources/Civil Service Division. However, Ms. Steffan continued, a universal model was not available and she explained a good performance management tool needed to be customized for every department as each functioned differently and provided different services.

With regards to Ms. Steffan's prior comment that she would not ask for a position she did not need, Ms. Seeber opined if they were to poll every department head, they would find each would indicate that they needed more staff. She stated it was incumbent upon the Board of Supervisors to determine whether there was an ability to reallocate some positions according to the duties performed and to determine how positions functioned together in a department. Ms. Seeber indicated part of this process required the ability to use some type of a performance management process, customized to each department, to identify how effective the current staffing levels were and she commented that the lack of this tool put the County at a disadvantage in this arena. Ms. Steffan replied there were a number of structures in place that prevented them from being as efficient as they could be.

With regards to exit interviews, Ms. Steffan apprised she had sent an email to the Department Head staff requesting that all exit interviews be performed by the Human Resources Department; she added

that some Department Heads had responded to note impending vacancies, while others had not. Ms. Seeber asked what had been done about those who had not responded and Ms. Steffan advised no action had been taken. Ms. Seeber then inquired as to whether this lack of responsiveness should be brought to the Board's attention for further action or referred to the County Administrator. Ms. Steffan advised she did not feel this matter should be referred away from her Office because she had not had the opportunity to follow up on the email; she added that she would have followed up on the email, but frankly, she did not have the capacity to take on any other responsibilities right now. Ms. Seeber commented that several months ago the Board of Supervisors had expressed that exit interviews should be made a priority and she had a number of questions as to why employees were leaving and how the Board could better respond to this issue.

With regards to the Social Services Division, Chairman Geraghty questioned how many people were leaving the organization and Ms. Steffan replied there were not that many. Chairman Geraghty commented that if the Human Resources Office became aware of a resignation after the person had left they should be able to rectify the situation by making an inquiry by telephone and Ms. Steffan replied affirmatively; she added that in many cases they received a call from the department to notify of a vacancy and the reason for it.

In relation to Ms. Steffan's prior indications she planned to request that her Office's Temporary HR/CS Assistant position be made permanent in the 2015 Budget, and speaking as the former Budget Officer, Chairman Geraghty commented that he did not feel the realized 2015 County Budget would be as forgiving as the initial projections indicated; therefore, he added, he would be cautious about creating any new positions. Chairman Geraghty said they should strive to avoid a situation like the one encountered in 2009 when the budgetary situation had made it necessary to implement staffing reductions and layoffs. He concluded that while the budgetary situation was not dire, he maintained his opinion that they should avoid position creations and instead encourage existing staff to work harder and more diligently. Ms. Steffan responded that she understood the scarcity of resources and the need to prioritize expenses, but said she was unsure how much more work her Department could produce as the majority of her staff punched in and out for their shifts and would incur overtime if they worked beyond their scheduled hours, or they would have to be given time off during the week to compensate for the extra time worked which was not ideal. She added the only staff member eligible to receive overtime pay currently was the Personnel Technician for proctoring Civil Service Exams on Saturdays. Ms. Steffan apprised that it was only Wednesday and she had already put in a substantial number of hours for the week.

Returning to the issue of exit interviews, Mr. Westcott said he assumed the primary reason for staff turnover in the Department of Social Services could be attributed to the Caseworker positions which were being vacated due to the availability of similar positions in other neighboring counties, or with the State, at higher pay rates. Beyond that, he added, the turnover seemed to be sporadic. Ms. Steffan confirmed Mr. Westcott's assumptions were correct and she advised that if an alarming trend arose it would be easily identified.

Paul Dusek, County Administrator, commented one important fact to remember was that Ms. Steffan was building the Human Resources Division from the ground up for Warren County. He noted there were many initiatives to be accomplished, including development of performance review procedures, but they could not be achieved until the basis of the Department was established. Mr. Dusek stated that when the rest of the County had switched to the New World program, which was the main financial system used, the Civil Service Division had not made the transition, leaving this work to be completed by Ms. Steffan and her staff. He said that in fairness to Ms. Steffan, it was important to acknowledge that this work would take time to complete. Mr. Dusek stated he was very happy to learn that Ms. Steffan anticipated the release of an Employee Handbook in 2015 as this was an important document to have. He said that from his prospective, he understood a certain amount of growing pains were being experienced, but he believed they would overcome them. With regards to staffing concerns, Mr.

Dusek advised that while he understood and respected Chairman Geraghty's reluctance to create new positions in the 2015 Budget, he felt they needed to weigh the County's obligations and needs to determine where reductions should be made and where they should not. In conclusion, he stressed, once again, that the Human Resources Division was in the midst of being established, which would take some time to complete before they could move on to addressing other projects.

Referring to the Temporary HR/CS Assistant position, Mr. Conover questioned whether this would be a tested position if the Board decided to make it permanent in 2015 and Ms. Steffan replied that it would be subject to Civil Service testing. Additionally, Mr. Conover asked if making the temporary position a permanent part-time position would suffice and Ms. Steffan indicated she was unsure and would need to consider that option before offering a response.

There being no further questions for Ms. Steffan, privilege of the floor was extended to Mrs. Nenninger to make a presentation on Civil Service operations; she displayed a document briefly outlining her duties, a copy of which is on file with the meeting minutes. Mrs. Nenninger announced that because Ms. Steffan's presentation had provided a detailed accounting of the work completed by the Civil Service Office she would refrain from reviewing that aspect further, but said she would bring to the Committee's attention the fact that when she was appointed as Personnel Officer she had been charged with the responsibility of fulfilling the statutory obligations and responsibilities of the Civil Service Office. Therefore, she continued, no matter where the Personnel Officer was housed, the Civil Service work remained her responsibility. Additionally, Mrs. Nenninger advised that any errors in Civil Service work, whether it was completed by herself or a member of the support staff in the Human Resources/Civil Service Office, it was ultimately her responsibility. She acknowledged this was an unusual structure because she was the responsible party for the work by statutory declaration and she noted that while she answered to the Board of Supervisors, who appointed her, she also answered to the State of New York due to the oversight requirements provided by the New York State Constitution. Mrs. Nenninger advised she was required to provide the State with annual reports, as well as to respond to oversight inquiries made throughout the course of the year and she noted that she also worked with all of the County Departments, the Towns, Village of Lake George, the school districts and SUNY Adirondack to address their Civil Service requirements.

Mrs. Nenninger apprised that from the date that a position was created until the time it was terminated, every personnel change made required a transaction processed through the Civil Service Office to ensure it was legal and within the realm of the Civil Service Law. As an example of the assistance she provided, Mrs. Nenninger explained that earlier in the week she had met with Supervisor Strough, *Town of Queensbury*, to discuss a vacancy created by retirement and the desire for the Town of Queensbury to combine duties and establish a hybrid position classification that would meet the Town's needs while complying with Civil Service allowances. She commented that although she had felt somewhat overwhelmed when first assuming the Personnel Officer position, she been able to participate in a very valuable mentorship program offered by the State to assist with any questions she might have and she noted this had proven to be an excellent support system.

Mrs. Nenninger reported there were institutional backlogs that needed to be caught up and she said she had recently spoken with representatives at the Towns of Johnsbury and Thurman about paperwork backlogs and how to appropriately catch up; she added that they were in the process of catching up these backlogs while trying to keep things current. Mrs. Nenninger stated that, like the Human Resources Office, the Civil Service Office was facing a structural issue and she had spoken at length with State representatives about the best way to prioritize the work required to rebuild the protocols and procedures used for classification of positions, test administration, etc. She stated that they needed to bring their backlog current and sustain timely submission of documentation, and while she was working to meet these goals, it would take some time to reach them. Mrs. Nenninger advised that

early in 2015 she would be able to provide specific figures relating to Civil Service positions in association with the filing of the annual report to the State of New York. She added that the report would be filed with the State Civil Service Commission, where she would discuss various positions still waiting for formal classification outside of the competitive bargaining unit. Mrs. Nenninger stated that every day calls were received regarding Civil Service positions and she encouraged anyone with questions to contact her directly. She advised hers was a very public office as that was the only way they could establish credibility and support for all of the positive occurrences. Mrs. Nenninger noted there were a number of provisional employees working for Warren County, not all of which would retain their positions by scoring in the top three when subject to Civil Service testing, and this was likely to lead to issues where she would be required to confirm that the testing procedures used were valid. She added that while these situations would not always be easy, she wanted to create a supportive system to instill confidence that every decision was made consistently, objectively and in the best interest of the agency while recognizing the employees rights, as well as those applying for testing and waiting their turn for an opportunity to be employed.

With regards to the organization of the Human Resources/Civil Service Office, Mrs. Nenninger acknowledged that this was an unusual situation because the Personnel Officer was typically a Department Head, rather than under supervision. She added that while this organization was not illegal, they were still working to determine whether it was practical. Mrs. Nenninger advised she had met just yesterday with Mr. Dusek to discuss this matter and she, Ms. Steffan, Mr. Dusek and Chairman Geraghty planned to meet next week and try to determine a solution that would increase her level of comfort that those duties and responsibilities for which she has a statutory obligation to both the Board of Supervisors and the State were being completed, while allowing her enough control to make this happen. In conclusion, Mrs. Nenninger once again encouraged anyone with questions regarding Civil Service to contact her directly.

Mr. Girard said it seemed that the Office was experiencing some issues but it seemed there were none that were insurmountable. He continued that he was used to the way the Office had been run in prior years and wanted to make sure that the Civil Service Office was not suffering, but would be enhanced by the Human Resources aspect that needed to be implemented. Mrs. Nenninger advised that in the past four months since she had assumed the Personnel Officer position they had defined their operational issues and part of the challenge they faced was dealing with backlogs to meet State obligations while still meeting systemic needs to review processes for all aspects of the test administration, all of which was her responsibility to complete in association with the Human Resources Division. She added that she and Ms. Steffan were committed to reviewing this situation with Mr. Dusek next week in an effort to resolve issues and make the process more smooth; she added that she and Ms. Steffan had been conversing about the situation and trying to work out the operational issues of the Office and discussing ideas to address them. Mrs. Nenninger reported that the State offered education for Personnel Officers and support staff which she would be attending at no cost to the County in Albany, NY and over the next few months hoped to enhance her abilities to address specific needs. She commented there was a lot of work to do in the Department and that was why they were asking for more help, some of which related to the fact that all of the systems used in the Civil Service arena were old and needed to be updated which would take a lot of her time. Once again, Mrs. Nenninger advised she would be making a presentation in 2015 before her report was submitted to the State of New York, but said she could return to address any other questions the Committee might have before that time.

Ms. Steffan stated they had identified the number of provisional employees currently in place at Warren County and had submitted more requests for testing than they had in prior years; however, she added, not all of the tests had been scheduled. Mrs. Nenninger stated that in response to concerns about provisional employees, they had made it their top priority to address them in accordance with Civil Service Law and do everything possible to get the necessary testing in place.

Concluding discussion on this topic, Mr. Dusek stated the Human Resources/Civil Service Office was a work in progress and was experiencing some growing pains; however, he stated, given the very talented staff in place, he was convinced they would reach a solution to improve the situation. He reminded the Committee that the decision to place the Personnel Officer within the Human Resources had been made based on the fact that in its prior incarnation, the Human Resources and Personnel Offices had not worked well together when created as two separate departments.

Moving on to Agenda Item 1B, Mr. Taylor noted that discussion regarding the Reallocation Committee's recommendations for the Payroll Supervisor position in the Treasurer's Office had been tabled at the August 6th Personnel Committee meeting. Ms. Steffan pointed out that the Agenda packet included more detailed information regarding the recommendation, as requested at the prior Committee meeting, providing comparisons to other similar positions and substantiating the recommended increase from a Grade 16 to a Grade 18.

Mr. Simpson questioned how a salary study was initiated and Ms. Steffan responded that the Reallocation Committee was created by virtue of the CSEA contract to review recommendations for position classification or grade changes in May of each year when made by either the CSEA or the Board of Supervisors. She added that a recommendation of this nature prompted a salary study and position review and she noted that in this case, the recommendation was made by the Treasurer's Office. In response to the confusion expressed by some Committee members as to how this recommendation could have been forwarded to the Reallocation Committee from the Treasurer's Office, Mr. Dusek clarified that the recommendation had actually been made by the CSEA, not the Treasurer's Office; he further clarified that Reallocation Committee review could only be prompted by recommendations referred by the Board of Supervisors or the CSEA.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Mr. Girard and seconded by Mr. Sokol to approve the Reallocation Committee's recommendations for reclassification of the Payroll Supervisor Position from a Grade 16 to a Grade 18.

Mr. Girard questioned whether this change would take place immediately or if it would be delayed for inclusion in the 2015 Budget and Mr. Dusek replied that the Committee would make that decision. Ms. Wood pointed out that the Reallocation Committees recommendation suggested that the change be made effective January 1, 2015.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Taylor called the question and the aforementioned motion was carried unanimously to implement the recommendation with an effective date of January 1, 2015 and to refer same to the Finance and Budget Committees.

Mr. Taylor advised Item 1C referred to a reporting provided by Ms. Steffan regarding the costs/savings of vacant positions filled and he pointed out that a copy of the report was included in the Agenda packet. Ms. Steffan pointed out the report included in the Agenda packet reflecting vacant positions and explaining why they were vacated, as well as pertinent salary information.

Ms. Wood pointed out there were a couple of entries which showed no savings to the County when there was a difference between the Incumbent Salary (*former employee*) and the salary the position was filled at. Ms. Steffan replied that this was because the "Approved v. Actual" column of the report compared the "Salary Approved" (*base salary*) and the "Salary Hired" figures; she advised she could add another column to compare the "Incumbent Salary" and "Salary Hired" figures. Ms. Steffan apprised that she could revise the report to account for all vacancies experienced from the beginning of the year if the Committee desired that she do so.

Mr. Conover suggested that the report be expanded to include some indication of whether the position was being filled provisionally, as well as to show if a test had been ordered and when. Ms. Nenninger

advised State Law required that Civil Service testing be requested within 30 days of filling a tested position; however, she added, the test was not given until the State ordered it. Mr. Conover noted there was a need for the Department Heads to be more timely in notifying the Civil Service Department of upcoming vacancies. For instance, he continued, if it was known that an employee would be retiring in six months, the Department Head should notify Mrs. Nenninger so that the appropriate testing could be requested. Ms. Steffan responded that although they could request testing, the test would not be offered until the State ordered it to be given, which was an unspecified amount of time; she added that she was unsure whether this could be changed to institute a more regulated testing procedure as the issue in this case was at the State level.

A brief discussion ensued.

Resuming the Agenda review, Mr. Taylor advised Items 2A-B consisted of referrals from the Health Services Committee and he outlined them, as follows:

Item 2A - Request from the Public Health-WIC (*Women, Infants & Children*) Division to hire temporary help to fulfill the scope of work for a special project being undertaken in the WIC division as a result of the release of "unallocated" grant funding for 2015. The temporary help is to be provided by a per diem Health Educator currently working about 15 hours per week. The additional work associated with the WIC project will increase the number of hours worked by the per diem Health Educator to approximately 24 hours per week for the duration of the project.

Item 2B - Request from Westmount Health Facility to create the new position of Senior Account Clerk Per Diem, *Grade 7, Annual Base Salary of \$29,612*, and to ratify the actions of the Administrator of Westmount Health Facility in filling the position prior to receiving Personnel Committee and Board approval. This position is to be used for a limited number of hours to provide training by a former Senior Account Clerk to the newly hired Senior Account Clerk, at a total cost not to exceed \$1,000. Funding for this expense was available within the existing budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and carried unanimously to approve both Items 2A and B, as outlined above and the necessary resolutions were approved for the September 19th Board Meeting.

Mr. Taylor stated Agenda Item 3 included a request from the Public Works Committee, *DPW*, to authorize Maja Tlokiska-Scroggins, Senior Account Clerk, to enroll in job-related courses entitled "Intro to College Writing; Intro to Algebra; and Intro to Business, Financial Accounting" through SUNY Adirondack, for the term commencing in the fall of 2014 and terminating in December of 2014 at a cost of \$2,150.70, as part of the requirements for an Accounting Degree program. He noted that if the request was approved, Ms. Tlokiska-Scroggins 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. Girard, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was approved for the September 19th Board Meeting.

Agenda Item 4, Mr. Taylor noted, pertained to Requests/Items to be Discussed by the County Administrator, and he advised there were none to be addressed. He pointed out Section IV, Vacancies Filled, which listed all of the vacant positions approved for filling since the last Committee meeting. Mr. Taylor reminded the Committee that no action was necessary in relation to this item which was for informational purposes only as the authority to fill vacant positions was now provided by the Supervisory Committees. Section IV consisted of the following:

IV. Vacancies Filled:
Public Health - WIC

1. Infant Feeding Advocate (part-time), *Grade 3, Base Hourly Rate of \$11.87*, due to resignation. This is a mandated, non-Union position which receives 100% State reimbursement through the WIC program.

Sheriff

1. Patrol Officer #25, *Annual Base Salary of \$36,414; Hiring at Step 3 Salary of \$47,710 - Current Incumbent Salary is \$61,288*, due to retirement. This is a non-mandated, Union position that receives no reimbursements.

Treasurer

1. Junior Accountant - Temp, *Annual Base Salary \$50,000*, due to creation. Position to be used to fill vacancy during family medical leave absence. This is a non-mandated, non-Union position which does not receive any reimbursements. *This position was created by Resolution No. 405 of 2014, adopted on August 15, 2014.*

Westmount Health Facility -

1. Senior Account Clerk, *Grade 7, Annual Base Salary of \$29,612*, due to resignation. This is a non-mandated, Union position which receives no reimbursements.

Mr. Taylor concluded the Agenda review with the Pending Items section, noting that Mr. Auffredou was present to address the Committee relative to the Warren County Ethics Law which was initially presented at the May 20, 2014 Board of Supervisors meeting and then referred back to the Personnel Committee for review and revision. Mr. Auffredou distributed copies of a revised Ethics Law which he encouraged the Committee members to review for discussion at the next Personnel Committee meeting; he advised that copies of the revised Ethics Law would be made available to all members of the Board of Supervisors for their perusal. *A copy of the revised Ethics Law is on file with the meeting minutes.* Mr. Auffredou noted that the revised Law had been modeled after the version prepared by the New York State Comptroller's Office for municipal use. He further noted that while the revised version was more streamlined and less involved than the original version, it was still sufficiently comprehensive.

There being no further business to come before the Personnel Committee, on motion made by Ms. Wood and seconded by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Deputy Clerk of the Board