

Joint Unified Personnel Board/Appointing Authorities
Pinellas County
September 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

The Unified Personnel Board (UPB) and the Appointing Authorities met for a joint meeting at 2:01 PM on this date in the Clerk's Fourth Floor Conference Room at the Pinellas County Courthouse, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Unified Personnel Board

Joan Vecchioli, Chair
Ricardo Davis, Vice-Chair
Jeffery Kronschnabl
Kenneth Peluso
Ralph Reid

Appointing Authorities

Whit Blanton, Executive Director, Forward Pinellas
Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Barry A. Burton, County Administrator
Jeffery Lorick, Director, Office of Human Rights
Kevin McKeon, proxy for Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser
Susan Morse, proxy for Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections
Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, Business Technology Services
Peggy Rowe, Interim Director, Human Resources (HR) (appeared virtually)
Charles W. Thomas, Tax Collector
Jewel White, County Attorney

Not Present

Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections
Peggy O'Shea, Unified Personnel Board
William Schulz II, Unified Personnel Board
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser

Others Present

Jennifer Monroe Moore, Ogletree, Deakins, et. al., P.C., Board Counsel
Lisa Arispe, Employees' Advisory Council (EAC) Representative
Krista Johnson, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Vecchioli called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

At the Chair's request, those in attendance introduced themselves.

DISCUSSION OF SPECIAL ACT

Chair Vecchioli referenced an email from Mr. Burton which requested a discussion regarding the status of the Special Act, the role of the UPB, and other relevant issues; whereupon, Mr. Burton discussed concerns regarding a lack of responsiveness by the HR Department and the resulting impacts to employees and departments, specifying an inability to act on concerns, a cumbersome structure, and a lack of training opportunities for managers. He added that there is also a concern regarding benefits, but that he feels the HR Department has done all that it can do regarding this issue.

In response to Mr. Burton's comments, Ms. Rowe conveyed that the Department is working to be more customer-focused, proactive, and responsive; that there is still work to be done regarding training needs; and that she does not see these concerns as an issue with the Special Act.

A lengthy discussion ensued and included remarks and questions regarding the structures of the HR Department and the UPB, the HR Director position and expectations, and the Special Act.

- Mr. Burke discussed recruitment, setting clear performance expectations and goals, and establishment of metrics, for the HR Director.
- Mr. Reid indicated that he questions whether some of the issues have stemmed from the current structure or a lack of clarity regarding processes within the structure; whereupon, Mr. Peluso related that he believes that there is a structural issue with regard to the evaluation and oversight of the HR Director. Mr. Thomas concurred regarding his belief that there is a structural issue and briefly commented regarding the relevance of the Special Act.

Chair Vecchioli pointed out that she believes the Special Act to be a checks and balances system and briefly discussed the Appointing Authorities' operating individually but sharing the HR Department as a resource; that the Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) would not exist outside of the current structure of the Special Act; and that it provides the UPB

oversight of the personnel rules; whereupon, she noted that she does not agree that there has been a lack of responsiveness or reactivity on the part of the UPB; and that due process also factors into the actions of the UPB; whereupon, Mr. Burton indicated that he is not proposing eliminating protections to employees; and that he feels there are ways to create a more streamlined process for dealing with day-to-day HR issues, and he reiterated the cumbersome nature of the current structure.

- Attorney White explained that the County Attorney is a functioning example of a person who is hired and terminated by one body, but who reports to a separate body. She acknowledged that the body to whom she reports, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), does meet regularly; whereupon, she expressed caution regarding the Constitutional Officers serving as the reporting board for the HR Director due to potential implications regarding the Sunshine Law.
- Mr. Davis opined that he believes that, historically, the lack of responsiveness with HR Directors has been an issue of leadership; that the person in the position should be able to take the right actions at the right time; and that a better job at the time of recruitment needs to be done, including making sure that the candidates understand that they will be serving a broad constituency.
- Messrs. McKeon and Reid expressed the challenges that come with the HR Director position, specifically with regard to the number of different people and departments served by the HR Department.

Additional discussion ensued regarding methodology and specifications regarding recruiting and hiring an HR Director; whereupon, Ms. Rowe expressed appreciation for all of the comments and acknowledged that the onboarding process is crucial, with an emphasis on explaining the reporting structure at that time.

EVALUATION PROCESS FOR DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Deviating from the order of the agenda, Chair Vecchioli requested that the evaluation process for the Director of Human Resources be considered at this time, noting that that the UPB asked Attorney Moore to work with Ms. Rowe to develop a model of an evaluation process which encompasses responsiveness to customer needs and which provides meaningful feedback to the HR Director; whereupon, Attorney Moore provided an overview of their collaboration, noting that the next step is to obtain the members' thoughts regarding a model which would include constructive feedback and be more qualitative than the current quantitative type of evaluation being utilized.

Responding to comments and queries by Mr. Burton, Attorney Moore provided brief details regarding the suggestion of identification of expectations for the HR Director by individual departments.

A discussion ensued regarding the following topics:

- Frequency of joint UPB and Appointing Authority meetings
- Meetings between the Appointing Authorities and the HR Director
- Outlining expectations to the HR Director and regular feedback meetings
- Difference between goals and priorities and synthesis and consensus amongst Appointing Authorities
- Potential initial quarterly reviews for the HR Director
- Feedback from the HR Director as an agenda item for Appointing Authority meetings

Mr. Peluso left the meeting at 2:59 PM.

STATUS OF SEARCH FOR DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Burke introduced the item, shared his concern regarding the HR Director job description included in the proposal provided by consulting firm, GovHR, titled *Pinellas County, Florida Human Resources Director Recruitment Proposal, March 6, 2023*, noting that he does not believe that it accurately portrays the role. Attorney White referenced Page 6 of the document and clarified that the consulting firm may not eliminate any candidate; that it must forward information on all candidates to avoid any issue related to the Sunshine Law; and that any information provided to the consultant is also considered public record.

Mr. Rowe reported that a call with GovHR is scheduled for tomorrow; that the input provided from today's meeting will be shared; and that the firm predicts that the process to hire an HR Director will take between 13 and 14 weeks from the time recruitment efforts launch; whereupon, in response to a query by Mr. Burton, Ms. Rowe confirmed that GovHR was selected at a previous Appointing Authority meeting.

Mr. Burke requested that those in attendance today send comments regarding the GovHR proposal to Ms. Rowe; and that updates will be provided as the process progresses.

A discussion ensued regarding various aspects of the recruitment process, and Attorney White provided input regarding requirements related to the Sunshine Law.

The meeting was recessed at 3:20 PM and reconvened at 3:31 PM.

DISCUSSION OF HEALTHCARE CONTRACT

Chair Vecchioli indicated that Mr. Burton asked for the healthcare contract to be placed on the agenda for discussion; whereupon, Mr. Burton indicated that there continues to be poor service for employees, increased charges, and levels of review which were not previously needed. He reported that there have been skyrocketing costs under the Cigna contract; and that an audit is being conducted.

Mr. Burke, with input by Ms. Rowe, shared that a meeting to provide preliminary audit results is being held on September 29 at 11:00 AM, and a brief discussion ensued, which included various concerns and experiences with the current healthcare vendor; whereupon, Mr. Burke posed the possibility of surveying employees for the purpose of obtaining data regarding level of satisfaction.

Mr. Burke asked if there was a way to do a survey of the employees to find out their level of satisfaction with the current health care provider; whereupon, Assistant Director of HR Maria Ciro encouraged employees to contact Employee Benefits regarding issues that they have experienced.

A discussion ensued, and Attorney White indicated that it should be made clear to employees that the request to share information is voluntary. EAC Representative Lisa Arispe related that she will share the request at the EAC meeting scheduled for September 28.

OPEN ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Employee voice survey

Responding to queries by Chair Vecchioli and Attorney White, Mr. Burke reported that the survey concluded on September 15, and Ms. Ciro noted that the survey results are estimated to be available by late October.

- Budget update

Mr. Burton indicated that the BCC approved the County's budget on September 19 and included the proposed pay adjustments.

- County holiday calendar

Mr. Burke requested that the Appointing Authorities give some thought to the calendar, noting the challenges faced by the Clerk's Office due to a statute requiring it to be open when the court system is open.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 PM.