

Joint Unified Personnel Board/Appointing Authorities
Pinellas County
August 22, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The Unified Personnel Board (UPB) and the Appointing Authorities met for a joint meeting at 2:00 PM on this date in the Clerk's Fourth Floor Conference Room at the Pinellas County Courthouse, 315 Court Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present – UPB

Ricardo Davis, Chair
Ralph O. Reid IV, Vice-Chair
Jeffery Kronschnabl
Peggy O'Shea
Kenneth Peluso
Joan Vecchioli

Not Present

William Schulz II

Present – Appointing Authorities

Whit Blanton, Executive Director, Forward Pinellas
Ken Burke, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Barry A. Burton, County Administrator
Wade Childress, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)
Jeffery Lorick, Director, Office of Human Rights
Charles W. Thomas, Tax Collector
Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser
Jewel White, County Attorney
Brian Zumwalt, representing Jeff Rohrs, Business Technology Services (BTS)

Not Present

Julie Marcus, Supervisor of Elections
Jeff Rohrs, Chief Information Officer, BTS

Others Present

Jennifer Monrose Moore, Ogletree, Deakins, et. al., P.C., Board Counsel
Leena Delli Paoli, Employees' Advisory Council (EAC) Representative
Tammy Burgess, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

GOALS FOR CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

Mr. Childress reported that a new Benefits Director has been hired and will begin on September 9.

Mr. Childress indicated that he has identified five long-term goals that he believes are critical for the success of the HR Department; and that specific sub-goals and projects can be placed under the long-term goals; whereupon, he identified and discussed each of the following five goals:

- Strengthen relationships with the UPB, Appointing Authorities, and EAC.
- Increase HR team's competencies and nurture a positive environment that optimizes job satisfaction, performance, and customer service.
- Implement a culture of innovation to continually improve the benefits experience for employees and retirees at a reasonable cost to the County.
- Refine the customer service model for HR practices in order to continually identify and meet the needs of the Appointing Authorities.
- Develop a more unified approach to HR practices across the County.

Discussion ensued and included comments and suggestions regarding the aforementioned long-term goals, sub-goals, ability to measure accomplishments, and method for evaluating Mr. Childress' performance in the interim.

EXECUTIVE LEADER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL TOOL

Mr. Childress indicated that he has met with Mr. Reid and Attorney Moore and was tasked with reviewing the current tool and making suggestions for revisions; and that he was also asked to review and make suggestions with regard to the appraisal tool utilized for the County Attorney's performance.

He related that, as a Board of Directors members of CPS HR Consulting, he is given \$5,000.00 worth of services each year; and that he has spoken with its CHRO, who will be providing some examples of appraisals; whereupon, he indicated that he will share those with Mr. Reid and Attorney Moore to obtain their input; and that a final product will then be presented to the UPB. He also noted that he would be glad to provide the final product to the County Attorney for consideration by the County Attorney Oversight Committee's use.

Attorney Moore, with input by Mr. Reid, briefly discussed the current method for evaluating the CHRO's performance and the potential benefits of utilizing a more qualitative approach; whereupon, Mr. Burke suggested that, as an added step to the evaluation process, the Appointing Authorities could meet to discuss Mr. Childress' performance and then create a type of executive summary focused on priorities.

A lengthy discussion ensued and included comments related to the current evaluation process and suggestions for potential changes and Sunshine Law requirements.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PROCESS FOR EMPLOYEES

Mr. Childress indicated that this agenda topic was a request from the UPB; whereupon, Mr. Reid indicated that the lack of consistency of the performance evaluation process for classified employees creates challenges for the UPB when hearing an appeal or grievance; and that the UPB would like to understand how performance evaluations are going to occur, particularly for classified employees.

Mr. Childress provided information relating to a lack of HR tools, various systems currently utilized for performance evaluations and challenges, such as an inability to track the status of performance evaluations, and future implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning system; whereupon, a lengthy discussion ensued and included the topics of current methods and challenges, potential timeline for implementation of a new system, addressing performance evaluations in the interim, status of performance evaluation training for supervisors, and anniversary date or focal point as the deadline for administering performance evaluations.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Mr. Reid, with input by Ms. Vecchioli, indicated that the EAC continues to experience challenges with recruiting Employee Advocates and feels that there is a lack of support from the Appointing Authorities regarding the Advocate participation in the program. Mr. Burton related that he needs to ensure that managers are cooperating; and that there

also needs to be accountability by the Advocates with regard to keeping their supervisors informed of their whereabouts.

APPEAL/GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Mr. Childress indicated that the UPB, Appointing Authorities, and EAC have expressed frustration with the length of the appeal process; and that, while other entities may place case presentation time limits, it is important for employees to feel that they have been heard and treated fairly; whereupon, Mr. Burton provided brief comments regarding the current process.

Attorney Moore provided an overview of the appeal process, including information regarding the pre-hearing conference. She indicated that she has also heard concerns regarding the length of appeal hearings; that, however, the Board members have a right to hear anything that they feel is relevant; and that she defers more to their questions since they are in the decision-making role; whereupon, Attorney Moore related that, while there are ways to modify the process, any changes would also require a modification of the rules; and that it would ultimately need to be brought before the Board for discussion.

A discussion ensued and included the following topics:

- Consistency related to progressive discipline
- Revising appeal procedures in order to shorten the time length of hearings and related concerns, including erring on the side of due process
- Education and training for Employee Advocates
- Honest completion of performance evaluations
- Overtime incurred by classified employees in attendance at hearings
- Disadvantages of hearings that extend late into the evening
- Scheduling appeal hearings to begin earlier in the day
- Record clean-up by County attorneys

EMPLOYEE VOICE SURVEY

Mr. Burke introduced the item, related that the Appointing Authorities continually receive the lowest rating regarding how they deal with low-performing employees; and that he would like to work collaboratively to address this issue; whereupon, he, with input by Mr. Burton, indicated that the Appointing Authorities often do not feel supported by the UPB; and that managers have raised concerns regarding a perceived subjectivity of the UPB when determining the appropriateness of the level of discipline given.

Mr. Burke provided information related to how the probationary period is utilized for low-performing Clerk's Office employees; whereupon, in response to a query by Ms. O'Shea, Mr. Burton confirmed that there is a probationary period for all classified employees.

In response to a query by Ms. Vecchioli, Attorney Moore provided statistical information relating to the outcomes of appeals since she began representing the UPB and pointed out that it is the employee's burden to show that the disciplinary measures taken were not appropriate; whereupon, a lengthy discussion ensued.

Mr. Childress indicated that there are several items that he would like to take ownership of from an HR Department perspective, including providing proper and consistent guidance to managers and support and training to employees newly promoted into management positions.

Chair Davis indicated that, from his observation, UPB members demonstrate fierce independence when arriving at their decisions, and a brief discussed ensued.

OPEN ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

No one responded to the Chair's call for additional issues for discussion; whereupon, he noted that one of the positive aspects that he has heard result from this meeting is that there is a need for more frequent meetings of this type; and that the meetings provide a sense of how well they are responding to the needs of the organization.

On behalf of the Appointing Authorities, Mr. Burke thanked the Board for their commitment and professionalism.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Davis adjourned the meeting at 4:03 PM.