

LRES (LABOR RELATIONS & EMPLOYEE SERVICES) COMMITTEE MINUTES
County Board Room, Oneida County Courthouse
July 22, 2021 10:00 a.m.

LRES COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Ted Cushing/Chairman, Billy Fried/Vice-Chairman, Dave Hintz and Scott Holewinski

LRES COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Sonny Paszak (excused)

ALSO PRESENT IN PERSON: Lisa Charbarneau, Jenni Lueneburg (LRES); Tina Smigielski (Finance); Karl Jennrich (Planning & Zoning); Paul Fiene (Forestry); Terri Hook, Tyler Young, Jill Butzlaff (Sheriff's Office); Mary Rideout, Joel Gottsacker (Social Services/ADRC); Crystal Schaub, Lucas Johnson (Medical Examiner); Troy Huber, Lindsey Kennedy (Buildings & Grounds); Michael Romportl (Land Information)

ALSO PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Myles Alexander (UW-Extension); Linda Conlon (Public Health); Kyle Franson (Register of Deeds); Amy Franzen (Register in Probate); Richard Moore (Lakeland Times)

CALL TO ORDER AND CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Cushing called the LRES Committee to order at 10:00 a.m. in the County Board Room of the Oneida County Courthouse. The meeting has been properly posted in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law, and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Fried to approve today's agenda. Second by Holewinski. All Committee members present voting 'Aye'. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Hintz to approve the minutes of June 9th, June 16th and July 7th meetings. Second by Fried. All Committee members present voting 'Aye'. Motion carried.

APPROVE BILLS AND VOUCHERS

Charbarneau presented the bills and vouchers for the LRES Department in the amount of \$1,300.77 for pre-employment screening and benefit administration costs. Motion by Hintz to approve the bills and vouchers as presented. Second by Fried. All Committee members present voting 'Aye'. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comments by participants in the County Board Room or on Zoom.

CONSERVATION PROJECT ASSISTANT STAFFING REQUEST

Jennrich requests to continue his Conservation Project Assistant position due to their DNR River Planning Grant funding being continued for 2022. The grant covers 100% of the position that was first approved for 2021. Jennrich states the position inventories existing culverts and the status of the culvert. This information is then used to prioritize which culverts need to be replaced in the county. Brief discussion held. Motion by Fried to approve the Land & Water Conservation position as presented as long as the grant funding continues. Second by Holewinski. All Committee members present voting 'Aye'. Motion carried.

2022 STAFFING REQUESTS

SOCIAL WORKER AND CHILDREN SERVICES SUPPORT – SOCIAL SERVICES: Rideout reports that substance abuse continues to be a big problem in Oneida County and the pandemic has magnified the issue. Rideout says Youth Justice referrals have increased over the past year, most likely due to the pandemic isolation orders. Rideout discussed the 140% increase in out-of-home placement costs over the past year and the department’s efforts to apply for grants to offset some of these costs. Rideout provided information on increasing Social Worker caseloads and out of home placement costs, and feels two additional Social Worker positions should be added to her staff. Rideout discussed 1999 when out-of-home placement costs skyrocketed; when more Social Workers were hired, the costs came back down in future years due to increased contact with clients. Rideout says since Social Workers were added in the early 2000’s, the department has worked to reduce staff by attrition and has been able to return money to the general fund but they are at the point where additional resources are needed to address the issues and get costs under control. Rideout says the state is currently conducting a study to determine reasonable Social Worker caseload sizes.

Rideout discussed the CSS (Children Services Support) position previously created to assist Social Workers with out-of-home placement visits and other needs, and feels that adding another CSS position would allow for increased visits which has been found to speed up the return of a placed child back to their home. Rideout says she will be requesting reimbursement from AARPA funds for both proposed additional positions since the increased needs are pandemic related. Social Services and ADRC are still working together on the combining of department budgets to see if additional efficiencies can be found. Rideout says in the absence of AARPA funds, the Social Worker position would be funded 100% with tax levy, and the CSS position would potentially be 63% tax levy funded with remaining funds hopefully coming from grants. Smigielski says AARPA funds would cover these position costs except for retirement and workers compensation costs due to guidelines. Fried feels these issues need to be addressed by county departments on a bigger level; Rideout says a couple of groups are already forming to discuss the issues and come up with action plans and solutions. Cushing agrees that a Task Force should be created to deal with the rising drug issues in Oneida County.

Motion by Fried to approve adding the additional Children’s Services Support position for 2022 as presented and place into the 2022 budget requests. Second by Holewinski. Holewinski clarified that this is just adding to requests and the position still needs to be considered at budget season. Fried amended motion to add “and send to Administration Committee for the 2022 budget considerations. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

Motion by Cushing to approve adding the additional Social Worker position to the 2022 budget and send onto the Administration Committee for consideration. Second by Holewinski. Holewinski notes that Rideout has excelled at cutting budget costs wherever she can in the past so if Rideout is now asking for additional positions, it must truly be needed. Fried feels the county needs to consult with people working in the front lines of the battle on drugs, and determine where the county should be spending their “first dollars” in addressing the battle in the most efficient manner. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

FORESTRY: Fiene discussed the two current LTE positions used for county park maintenance and mowing. The pandemic has caused a large increase in county park and campground usage and the 1,000 approved LTE hours have not been enough to cover the increased maintenance needs, therefore Fiene is requesting 200 additional hours for 2022. Fiene says the increased usage has generated about \$6,700 in increased revenues from camping fees collected and additional silent sport trail passes purchased. Fiene also notes that there has been an increase in usage of Townline Park, which is in need of extra maintenance and repairs. Fried asks which duties will not be completed if the request is not approved. Fiene says the Gillett-Wickham Park wouldn’t get as much maintenance and with the park being remote, there tends to be more after-hours

2022 STAFFING REQUESTS (continued)

FORESTRY (continued): trespassing issues and vandalism which increases the maintenance needs of the park. Discussion held on budget constraint concerns. Motion by Fried to deny the Forestry additional hours staffing request of 200 hours as requested. Second by Holewinski. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

MEDICAL EXAMINER: Schaub requests to move her 50% Deputy Medical Examiner Lucas Johnson to full-time for 2022 based on the increase of work and counties that the department has taken on both during COVID and in the years prior to COVID. Schaub says when they first took on the additional work of Forest and Vilas County cases, no additional staff was added. With cases increasing in all three counties and no sign of things slowing down, the department definitely needs more help. Schaub notes that currently, the 50% position is given per diems for calls but if the position were moved to full-time, this expense would be removed, saving the department \$25,000 to be used to offset the \$56,000 needed to increase the position. Schaub says she does not have money in her current budget to cover the increase but would like to cover the additional cost with the Forest and Vilas County revenues the department generates, therefore not using any additional tax levy. Fried and Schaub discussed the potential retirement of several Medical Examiner LTE’s, which will add additional strain on the department. Schaub discussed the additional time needed to investigate COVID cases plus the increase in county population, which will only lead to more cases for the department. Fried feels the Medical Examiner’s office has made a lot of effort to find revenues and cut costs wherever they can and feels this request is appropriate. Hintz complimented Schaub on the well-managed department, noting that the department was not always well managed under previous Medical Examiners. Motion by Hintz to approve the request. Second by Cushing. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

ANNUAL STAFFING REQUESTS: Charbarneau presented the 2022 LTE staffing requests for existing positions that aren’t changing from 2021 to 2022. Motion by Cushing to approve the 2022 (LTE) annual staffing requests. Second by Hintz. Brief discussion held. Fried clarified and Charbarneau confirmed that this is only to add the positions to the proposed 2022 budget for consideration. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

TOOL ALLOWANCE/BUILDINGS & GROUNDS: Charbarneau discussed the Facilities Committee approving a Tool Allowance of \$25.00 per month for all employees in the Buildings & Grounds Department to cover the use of their phones in their jobs. Fried referenced previous discussions about Buildings & Grounds employee’s extensive use of their phones to communicate, photograph items needing repair and to use the internet to research parts and instructions in order to complete duties. Fried says the department can cover this cost in their budget due to eliminating the cost of radios by using cell phones. Motion by Cushing to approve the Buildings & Grounds Tool Allowance. Second by Holewinski. Smigielski clarified that this allowance is only available to full-time employees, not LTE’s; Charbarneau agrees to add this wording to the proposed Handbook change. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

PAID TIME OFF (PTO) UPDATE: Charbarneau provided updated handbook wording, changing PTO amounts from days to hours based on a 7.5-hour day. Charbarneau says the amounts listed do not change the total PTO employees get but simply changes the time measurement. Charbarneau discussed the various required work schedules for county employees based on their job needs, and feels days is no longer an appropriate time measurement to be listed. Brief discussion held. Motion by Holewinski to approve the change. Second by Hintz. All Committee members present voting ‘Aye’. Motion carried.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Charbarneau says in previous years, the LRES office has hosted an Ice Cream and Popcorn Social for Employee Recognition. In 2020, the LRES office provided wrapped ice cream bars and popcorn to departments due to the pandemic. Charbarneau has talked with Public Health and due to current issues still looming with the pandemic, it is recommended that LRES once again only provide wrapped items to observe extra sanitation protocols. Brief discussion held. Committee agrees for Charbarneau to proceed with the costs coming from funds already in the LRES Budget for Employee Recognition.

Charbarneau says she was approached by an employee willing to plan the 2021 Employee Christmas party. The employee is asking if the county could contribute to the cost of the party. Charbarneau provided a background on previous Employee Christmas parties that were funded by only employees. For a few years, some revenues from the employee soda machine were used but that has since ended with the change in soda machine vendors. Fried feels using taxpayer funds for an employee gathering would not be appropriate. Committee mutually agrees to not approve the request.

MOVE EXEMPT-SALARY EMPLOYEE TO MARKET RATE

Charbarneau referenced previous discussions regarding moving the remaining 28 Exempt positions from 1950 to 2080 annual hours to closer match the market rate for the positions. Charbarneau notes that some Exempt positions in the county have already been moved to 2080 annual hours and were moved by placing them on the next highest step in the new level that offered any increase. Charbarneau says other opportunities have come up through the years to move Exempt positions to 2080 annual hours based on cost savings found by adjusting other department positions but the Committee has often stated they would prefer to move all remaining Exempt positions at the same time rather than piecemeal the process. Charbarneau notes that downsizing of positions in the LRES, Land Information and Register of Deeds offices have left more than enough cost savings to cover this proposal if positions are moved to the next highest step but not enough if the positions are moved to the same step on the new schedule. Charbarneau says she has received concerns from employees about this change causing their salary not to go up the same percentage of additional hours they need to work, thus effectively reducing their hourly converted wage. Employees have also voiced concern about not receiving the same hourly rate equivalent on PTO payouts. Charbarneau says if Exempt staff were moved to the next highest step, the cost would be about \$31,000, which could be covered by other cost savings, but if Exempt employees were moved to the same step on the 2080 wage schedule, the cost would be about \$130,000, which is not affordable. Charbarneau says in talking with Department Heads, it was suggested to Grandfather employees regarding PTO, offering the highest converted hourly rate for payouts until their current rate matches their pre-converted rate. Smigielski suggests moving to what many other private sector employers use, which is for Exempt-Salary employees, PTO is taken in half and full days only. Charbarneau suggest taking the topic back to the Department Heads to discuss the issue of PTO further. Discussion held on past practices and market trends with Committee agreeing for Charbarneau to gather more information from Department Heads and come back to the Committee with more information.

PAID TIME OFF – PAYOUTS

Charbarneau says this topic was brought up at the last meeting with the Committee directing Charbarneau to bring back information on costs of PTO payouts. Charbarneau provided a handout showing the amounts paid for PTO payouts for employees with 500 or more hours as of November 2020 who elected a payout. Smigielski notes that for PTO payouts at termination of employment, there are no funds budgeted to cover these expenses, and departments are forced to absorb the payouts in their budgets. Romportl provided comments on the importance of continuing payouts. Brief discussion held by Committee. No actions taken.

AFFORDABLE EMPLOYEE HEALTH CARE (AEHC) COMMITTEE

Charbarneau says last fall, the AEHC Committee was formed by the County Board to review the employee health plan to find if cost savings and improvements could be made to the plan. With the plan renewal coming up, Charbarneau is inquiring if this Committee would like her to hold more meetings of the AEHC Committee to review the current plan and come up with recommendations prior to the start of the 2022 health plan renewal. Fried feels there are a few items that could be discussed and scheduling some meetings could be beneficial. Hintz feels holding additional meetings prior to renewal is not necessary and ideas could be funneled through this Committee if decisions need to be made. Discussion held with Committee agreeing to discuss the matter further as renewal numbers come in.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion by Holewinski, second by Hintz to go into closed session pursuant to section 19.85 (1)(c) for purposes considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee. (LIO Director compensation; ITS Staff compensation)

Roll call vote taken; all members voting in the affirmative. Motion carried. Committee went into closed session at 11:49 a.m.

Staff and others present in closed session: Charbarneau, Lueneburg and Smigielski

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Motion by Fried, second by Holewinski to return to open session. Roll call vote taken with all members voting in the affirmative. Motion carried. Committee returned to open session at 12:26 p.m. No motions were made in closed session. Upon return to open session, Cushing reports that the Committee directed Charbarneau to meet with the Land Information Director separately regarding additional compensation proposals.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comments by participants in the County Board Room or on Zoom.

FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS

Exempt-Salaried to Market Rate

FUTURE MEETING DATES

August 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

August 18, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Fried announced the adjournment of the LRES Committee meeting at 12:28 p.m.

/s/Billy Fried (for Ted Cushing)
Ted Cushing, LRES Committee Chairman

August 18, 2021
Date

/s/Jenni Lueneburg
Jenni Lueneburg, Committee Secretary

August 18, 2021
Date