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# April Meeting Minutes

# 4/21/21

**Attendees**

* Michelle Apman (Management)
* Adam Browning (Management)
* Denise Legato (Management)
* Barb Naramore (Management)
* Matt Olinger (Management)
* Monica Weber (MAPE)
* Martha Vickery (MAPE)
* Nicholas Snavely (MAPE)
* Kelsey Olson (MAPE)
* Harland Hiemstra (MAPE)
* Kristi Coughlon (MAPE)
* Dan Engelhart (MAPE) Business Agent
* Megan Benage (MAPE) M&C Committee Chair
* Jed Becher (MAPE)

Two thank you’ s.

Kick off with a thank you to DNR management for listening sessions that were held in response to the shooting of Daunte Wright without any requests from MAPE or other unions needed.

# Meeting overview

In reviewing the action tracking spreadsheet, Barb asked for clarification on what MAPE was looking for on DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). Megan responded that this had been communicated during interim meetings. Request had been made to have Rowzat and potentially Bradley, come and tell what they have in the works. What is each division doing? Aware of some efforts but not all. Barb commented that CMO doesn’t know all that is going on as much of the work is decentralized and happening at the lowest level and doesn’t want to slow that down or impede it at all. We are not asking for a department-wide inventory, but a general understanding of what is known related to DEI work and what the focus for the future may be.

Megan reviewed intranet changes – gave overview of the process that happened. DNR said thank you for the information, made some changes, fixed links but some info MAPE provided was incorrect. We are asked to provide the how and what when we bring things forward. We would like DNR to do the same explaining how the conclusions were arrived at. We want to know what the changes were and what was incorrect in what we provided. Denise said HR can provide that.

Denise provided a summary on organization health team – focused on results of telework survey. Barb reiterated that they have not lost the request for unions to be involved with this group.

Megan noted why we even have a spreadsheet. Felt it was going to be a good way to keep track of all the various actions that are in progress and to help hold each party accountable to what they said they would do.

## Meeting Facilitator Status and Progress

Feel there was a fundamental disconnect after our January meeting.

Wasn’t really until April that MAPE was asked to define the number of meetings before the request could proceed. We understand now that a number was needed to craft a contract. We were feeling very frustrated that we are still not moving forward with getting this set-up.

Barb commented that we were looking to develop a common understanding of what we wanted to do or achieve with an outside facilitator. A general description and then create some space for each party to create some objectives for each party. Management said they were interested in doing this but wanted a clear identification of what we both wanted to do. Wanted to have an interim checkpoint to determine if this is a good and useful service for both parties. Doesn’t feel that having different perspectives needs to be a stumbling block. Megan said we were unaware of a check-point, it was our understanding that there was going to be a set number of meetings with a facilitator. MAPE likes the idea of a checkpoint to see how the use of the facilitator is beneficial. Barb, interim checkpoint means there is something afterwards yet. Might conclude we don’t need anymore help, do need more help, maybe need something different. MAPE did not understand that we needed a number before we could move forward due to contracting. Denise commented – She felt like blame is being placed on HR. Said trust is a two-way street. We agreed about trust and pointed out that’s why we want a facilitator so all parties can feel heard and understood.

## Telework

Megan commented about the Wireside chat yesterday and what good sessions they were. Gave a big thank you as to how DNR is being very considerate of how things will be different in the future.

Barb wanted to put it in a broader context. It’s the future of how we are going to do our work as a department. About half have been reporting to a work site or the field. Thinking about all of our employees and the staff that have been exclusively working at home.

Said the survey was very rich in detail. Staff were extremely generous in answering the open-ended questions. Much time has been spent analyzing the open-ended questions to gather the qualitative information in them that was provided by staff, takes a great deal of time to analyze all of this given the high response rate and the level of detail provided by staff. Also looking at other ideas and best practices from other sources, NGO’s, private sector, other governments, etc… At the initial scoping phase in regard to their planning, there is quite a bit of work to do to plan for the opportunity to change the way we do our work. Lots of uncertainly by staff, such as what is my space going to look like, how many of my colleagues are going to be by me? There will be many other agencies that have more homogeneous types of operations that can announce their decisions sooner. DNR is not going to rush their decision as they have a great deal to consider. It will be a thoughtful process and there will be lead time for staff to make adjustments. Basically said she will not be pressured to react too quickly just because other agencies have moved forward with their policies. Do want clear and implementable criteria for supervisors in accessing if a group of jobs or job in their program area is suitable for telework. Sounds like HR is looking at job classes to make some determination. Many things are still in flux from a public health perspective. Last year people had to adapt, there was a large forcing mechanism. Now we have more time to implement the new changes which is good but will present its own set of challenges.

Denise follow-up - said the focus is on the future of work, not just telework but really looking at how / where telework fits into all of this and why they are taking a measured approach to implementing a plan. Part of the issue at the pandemic start, were forced to try to find ways for jobs that normally wouldn’t have been considered for telework to be able to telework. Where have there been areas where there has been effective telework? Reiterated that DNR is not like most other agencies and needs to factor in many things when considering all of this.

Barb – Vaccination status, will this affect what , how or where they will do their work. Anyone’s vaccination status is private. DNR will not know if anyone has been vaccinated. Will be working hard to make sure staff do not feel pressured to share their status. Will not be taking vaccine status into account when making decisions. Do feel that general population vaccination status will affect guidance on how and when staff do their work. Do have an option to require vaccination for some specific tasks but have not chosen to utilize that at this time.

Monica commented on the great job management did at the Wireside chats the previous day.

Barb, This is not a return to work as people have been working incredibly hard this past year. Have heard many stories like Monica just shared how they have become more efficient in some areas and others.

Megan followed with some specific questions.

Are there any general timelines at this point such as reshaping facilities? Will be slow, don’t want to make a decision and then find we don’t have enough space. Will be slow to change facilities. Some may be a no brainer decision for some changes. Some employees perspectives may change over time. Some may still want to maximize telework for the foreseeable future but then may change as the public health situation changes.

Megan, What principles and criteria will be applied? Barb-- Does not mean that everyone in the same class will be treated equally.

Megan, What is equitable and what is equal? Barb--Will want to see that principles are equally applied. We have some job classifications in DNR that are well suited for telework and some are not, even in the same classification. Two people in the same classifications may not have the same telework options based on their job responsibilities. There is also a seasonal component so the options available may also vary by season.

Matt chimed in that there are a number of statewide classes whose job responsibilities vary greatly.

Megan mentioned the concern about decisions being left up solely to the discretion of the supervisor.

Jed asked about an appeal process and said he would prefer it to follow the current performance review process. Barb and Denise responded that they had not considered that yet.

Barb--don’t have a framework for leadership to use for staff that want to share their hopes for telework. Will be mostly a one way conversation at this time. Denise added that its important to tell people there is no switch that is going to be flipped. Staff will have adequate time to make adjustments. Nothing is going to be done quickly without broad communication.

Nicholas stated in the chat: A question for future consideration: How are you going to deal with different supervisors that have different perspectives on telework, yet help all employees in similar job classes be treated the same under different supervisors who have different comfort with telework?

## Budget

Megan – asked management to address the questions on the agenda, also to comment on the strain from increased workload. Are we working to fill some of these positions to ease the strain?

* + Any layoffs planned?
  + Plan for filling open and vacant positions, how is management prioritizing needs across divisions and regions?
  + Big program changes?
  + New initiatives for the Department?

Barb – very far from the end of session and that is where we will have finality on our overall budget. Noted the big differences between the house and senate and don’t know where that will go at this time. Denise commented that if anything like layoffs were to happen, they would be done thoughtfully. Layoffs are not a frequent occurrence in the DNR.

Megan mentioned she appreciated the clarity that we are citizens and can contact our legislator, but don’t do it on work time or using state resources. Asked about filling open and vacant positions…. Will see one division get their vacancies filled but another division does not. Would like to understand why that happens sometimes.

Barb responded that divisions need to make decisions as to what their individual priorities are. We run a very lean agency. When there are vacancies, those create stresses. Lots of different factors that go into prioritization. We have been fairly successful in getting our requests granted by MMB. Hiring is metered by MMB so something might not be approved by MMB in this round but might be in the next round. Barb acknowledged that they know some work will not get done due to vacancies.

## Culture and Equity Assessment (DEI)

Megan – Plan to move this up in the agenda next time so it doesn’t get shortshort-changed changed. Question of maybe having Rowzat and Bradley give an update at the July meeting?

Megan mentioned that our trainings all say that a culture and equity assessment needs to be done of the organization. Kelsey said PAT has done this as part of their diamond assessment. Said there has been lots of good prep work, but the policies and procedures needed aren’t necessarily in place yet so her experience has been a little bit of a cart before the horse.

MAPE would like a high-level overview from Rowzat and Randolph. Barb suggested a small group to frame up that conversation would be good to make sure we have the right people participating and the right focus. Barb talked about the IDI that Kelsey has taken with PAT. There is a very clear distribution pattern of where people fall on that curve. 60% fall in the middle category. She actually questions the value of administering an IDI for every employee but perhaps do some representative sampling to confirm that we follow the general pattern or not before we begin and preserve resources for other work in this area. MAPE will take about the sampling idea and get back to management. Adam, Megan and Dan will meet in between to flesh out the DEI update for July.