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# Meeting notes for Meet and Confer 11/17/21

**MAPE attendees:** Megan Benage (chair), Jed Becher, Nicholas Snavely, Kristi Coughlon, Nicholas Snavely, Monica Weber, Martha Vickery, Jennie Skancke; with MAPE business agent Dan Engelhart and invited speaker Aisha Ellis.

**DNR management attendees:** Assistant Commissioner Barb Naramore; Denise Legato, HR director; Adam Browning, Labor Relations, Matt Olinger HR staffing supervisor

## Organizational Health Teams

Denise said there will be either quarterly update meetings just for the OHT for all, OR a joint meeting with all labor. MAPE M&C team said they would like a meeting about OHT together with reps from other unions.

Megan said she would send names of representatives to participate in these meetings.

The chair of the DNR Organizational Health team is Heidi Wolf in EWR.

## DEI Teams at DNR

### DEI Team

The DEI team is comprised of professional staff who report to the Special Assistant to the Commissioner for Strategy, Aisha Ellis. The team includes a DEI program coordinator, Career Pathways Project Manager (focused on the IDEC program), and an Affirmative Action Officer. These positions do not supervise staff but are responsible for coordinating and program managing agency-wide initiatives to advance and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and equal employment opportunity.

### Equity Change Team

* Equity Change Team is responsible at policy level for advising policies in imbedding DEI in administrative practices and our policy implementation.
  + This team is required by the Governor’s office.
  + The Equity Change Team will ask for applicants but has not done so yet.

The Equity Change Team has already been formed and consists of members who were appointed by the CMO. The team includes a wide array of experience and expertise, and there is representation from multiple levels of the agency, including senior leadership, subject matter experts, and the Commissioner’s Office.

Equity Change Team Membership Includes:

* Barb Naramore, Deputy Commissioner
* Aisha Ellis, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
* Rowzat Shipchandler, DEI Program Coordinator
* Denise Legato, HR Director
* Grant Wilson, Regional Director
* Dave Olfelt, Division of Fish and Wildlife Director
* Jill Westberry, ADA Coordinator
* Mary Robeson, CFO
* Gail Nosek, Communications Director
* Mimi Daniel, IDEC Project Manager
* OSD Division Director (vacant)

### DEI Action Team

* DEI Action Team is the adjunct to Organizational Health and Continuous Improvement teams
  + This team is responsible for carrying out the plans and policies developed by the Equity Change Team.
  + DEI Action Team will work underneath the Equity Change Team to operationalize the Equity Change Plan
  + DNR staff can apply for open positions on this team.
  + *Please name any planned members of this team or types of members*

This is planned as an open application process, and will hopefully attract DNR staff who have professional, academic, or other DEI experience and/or knowledge.

## Joint MAPE M&C and DNR management facilitation – update

Megan said that Adam sent an inquiry to Conflict Resolution Center requesting a bid on 11/16/21.

Adam – yes, attached was joint request document to the CRC – they will reply with how they think they can meet the request. We need to figure out how we can administer this between DNR and union.

Megan asked that CRC meetings to be set before next Meet and Confer.

Adam said he expects CRC to reply with their availability. He said they are digesting the request and planning to respond now, and how they respond might inform next steps. He said we will also need to consider M and C dates for 2022, and how we may want to plan for both types of meetings.

Megan said she was unclear on whether the conflict resolution would be done as part of M&C or separately and said the MAPE team sees them as separate.

Denise asked who from M&C will be involved in initial meetings?

Megan said the CRC participants from MAPE can be a subset of the team, in the planning and development stage, but in the actual meetings, it should be the entire MAPE M&C team.

Barb said she would distinguish cadence of meetings and content of meetings. She said that stretching out the CRC meetings over a quarterly schedule would be too far apart for getting good progress and results. However, she said it may be good to bring regular M and C topics up in the CRC sessions. There could be a session acquainting them with areas where we are trying to progress, then using a practice session on M and C issues.

Megan said she is fine with bringing in real examples, and we agree quarterly meetings are too far apart to make them workable with CRC. She said MAPE understands that the next step is for CRC to set up a structural meeting.

Adam said that securing interagency agreement will be important. CRC has paperwork to do on its side too.

## Interim PAT Director update

MAPE shared concerns about a possible interim PAT director. Those concerns were heard by management and noted.

## DEI update (DEI means Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)

Aisha Ellis and Barb Naramore presentation: Barb said management is looking to Aisha’s leadership as well as division actions to take care of DEI matters – no one is doing everything.

Aisha Ellis, special assistant to commissioner for strategy said her objectives are to:

* Achieve equal access
* Establish goals and strategic priorities around DEI
* Use a data-driven approach
* Promote consistent practices across the agency to make sure DNR is an inclusive workplace

She said she works with the senior management team to:

* Develop a change plan
* Imbed equity across the agency
* Chart progress
* Establish DEI Action Team – Rowzat (DEI Coordinator) will send out invitations to this to staff

She said we need to identify gaps in the the need for staff in terms of externally facing civil rights but do have a number of staff working on externally facing civil rights who do not necessarily work on diversity, equity, and inclusion team programs to be in compliance with requirements of our funders. They are assessing need for staff in terms of externally facing civil rights but do have a number of staff working on externally facing civil rights who do not necessarily work on diversity, equity, and inclusion teams.

She said that DEI staff were housed in HR in the past, similar to other agencies. She said that as DNR has grown, “DEI teams have become separate and are more closely aligned with commissioner’s office and to that end, Rowzat’s role as Divisional Program Coordinator as well as roles like the ADA program coordinator, all positions that were previously combined with the Affirmative Action Officer’s position, are now separate.” She said that while DNR does not have a structure reflective of MNDOT or DHS, we certainly have added capacity and are continuing to assess, and I think, respond to our needs, as they arise as they relate to civil rights.

Denise said this is an “evolving area” that has to be balanced with all agency needs, and that it’s important to remember that in the DNR, we have very few areas that are totally centralized. DNR has a decentralized approach to many what I would term administrative sort of functions. Division leadership is responsible for a lot, and staff statewide contribute in lots of ways to initiatives like DEI. She said that management is working on grassroots or organization-wide involvement and all of the various things that Aisha has described.

Regarding the Equity Change Plan, Jennie said that these actions have not been promoted to staff.

Dan said there are reasons that MAPE brings up other agencies as examples of a good structure for advancing DEI. He said we are looking at an election cycle next year of an administration that came out with a proclamation as a One Minnesota Council on DEI as their first action, and it took us two contract bargains for MAPE to even get a seat at the table with the Walz administration. Dan said he has not heard anything about MAPE having a seat at the table of any groups formally at DNR, and that he thinks that is a problem. Other agencies are incorporating an auto-seat for a MAPE designee, and he said that other unions should have seats too, if they wish to.

Dan said that MAPE needs to invite people to apply for open seats more assertively. He said a good example of a structure for DEI that is a much smaller agency than DNR is the Department of Education. It has established an equity center and it has incorporated really good practices. Through supplemental bargaining, MAPE was able to develop an equity council three years ago, which includes MAPE designees, agency and other labor designees. It is a highly effective body. He said that the group has engaged on strategic plan and affirmative action plan activities, and other pieces that were directed by the Walz administration. He said he does not know if that has happened at any other agency. He said DNR needs to get closer to a model like that. He said he would be happy to meet one to one, as Adam suggested or with whoever it is. MAPE needs to be engaged more on this at DNR than it has in the past.

Barb asked if Dan was referring to the Equity Change Team where MAPE would like a seat, or something else. She clarified that the DEI Team is for people who are reporting to Aisha, who are managers. The Equity Change Team will ask for applicants but has not done so yet. Management will give ample notice on those seats, she said.

Megan said that it was unclear to her the distinctions between the two teams. She said she thought Aisha said that the DEI Action Team was a subset of the Organizational Health Team, like an arm of it.

Barb confirmed that the DEI Team are those supervisors who report to Aisha – AAO, diversity coordinator, Mimi Daniel, and the work she is doing with the IDEC program, and right now our tribal liaison is in that group. So we call that our DEI team and it is “the centralized place for the things that are more departmental,” she said. The Equity Change Team is a department-wide group that will serve in an advisory capacity for the Organizational Health Team, as an adjunct team.

Aisha said that the “DEI Action Team is the adjunct to Organizational Health and Continuous Improvement teams – whatever programs or deliverables that have been outlined by OHT. The Equity Change Team is responsible to and changed by the governor’s office to move forward DEI across the enterprise. Our Equity Change Team is responsible at policy level for advising policies in imbedding DEI in administrative practices and our policy implementation. The Action Team will work underneath the Equity Change Team to operationalize the Equity Change Plan.” DNR staff can apply for open positions on it, she said.

Megan said this is an important point, and that it is encouraging to hear these things exist and that they would be encouraging for other staff to hear.

Barb said the names of the groups are similar and there was no intent to be confusing. The Equity Change Team is required by the governor’s office. The “action team” was identified by management as a group needed to facilitate the work of the Organizational Health Team

Jennie asked what the plan is for rolling this information out?

Aisha said she liked the suggestion (in the chat) of rolling out info through Wireside Chats. The group will also provide information to senior managers, such as when they are reaching goals in staffing. They want the commissioner’s office to be involved and invite greater collaboration across the agency. She said they do put DEI information in the Spotlight Newsletter. They are open to suggestions for the rollout information as well.

Jennie said she hears so many things outward facing, and internally. Even getting out the word about these efforts, she said, she feels that there is a kind of systemic questioning of appropriateness of some DEI ideas. There were some people who were brave enough to question why we had to even be doing this kind of diversity model. To get people to accept that DEI is important, there needs to be some self-examination of biases. How are we going to get at that? She said she wanted to raise the point because there are staff out there who don’t recognize that this is something of importance

Aisha said Jennie may be referring to the efforts at training and skill development are not making sufficient progress. DNR has a plan, she said, to examine what skills are needed for a foundational level of DEI awareness at an individual level and in practice. It includes training for developing individual competencies as well as skill building relevant to the kind of work people do at DNR. She said that Rowzat has done that type of training, and there are intermediate training levels, and that they have considered expert level courses, tailored to expert professional skills needed for cultural competency. She said a strategic plan for training is needed. They are also considering how to provide instruction to senior managers, and she is hoping that can be done in 2022. She said they are “concentrating on concepts of the IDI,” but also thinking about training in anti-racism, personal leadership development, imbedding DEI in the workforce. She said she is keeping in mind that DNR is very matrixed and each of our divisions can be almost like a separate organization. She said that two division, PAT and FAW, have completed IDI and have participated in an IDI cohort.

Nicholas said he would like to have a written list of all the training programs going on. He said that MAPE worked hard to get DEI items into the contract, but that the modifications that were ultimately accepted were nowhere near what they had hoped. Outside the contractual process, he said, MAPE would like to pursue DEAI topics, for example, expanding IDI cohorts beyond FAW and PAT on this, and asked what management’s thoughts are in allowing MAPE to plug into some of the groups working on it?

Denise said she wants time to consider the request. She said that Nicholas has expressed the position of MAPE and that MAPE is not the only bargaining unit. She said they have to decide how to get feedback from across the agency in a comprehensive and efficient way.

Barb said individual employees participate in DEI work, and also bargaining units participate in it. Management will be looking into both of those areas.

Megan thanked Aisha and told the group that MAPE will put this topic back on the agenda for future discussion after some time to reflect.

## Telework

Megan said that a lot of work has been done already to add structure to telework. People have been filling out telework agreements, which have either been going well, or it is a train wreck and staff are reporting that supervisors are being unfair in telework assignments. She said MAPE is aware that telework is evolving, but staff have reported they feel like they have no input. MAPE requested management put an appeals process into place.

Denise said no appeals process has been put into place yet. HR is still doing position evaluation forms and telework assignments. She said people “are still teleworking under a covid umbrella” and the evaluation will happen when we take down the umbrella. Denise said they are working on a draft appeals process and haven’t finalized it because they wanted to see what was reflected on the forms. Draft has not been vetted outside HR, but they will be publishing it soon. She said she may have been too optimistic that supervisors and employees would work together on the forms and that there would be a meeting of the minds. Apparently, that is not the case, and not just with MAPE members.

It is really important to remember it’s a work evolution topic, a work in progress. She said it will evolve, and what we think it is going to be in January may change in time. She said she has had a lot of questions on what will happen in January, but nobody really knows. We will need to stay flexible. The DNR’s approach to telework has to meet business needs, she said, and we need to fairly assess those needs too. Also the idea of how much face-to-face human interaction is needed is a factor.

Barb said management understands people’s need to understand what the appeals process will look like and will work as fast as possible to get that information out. Management is expecting that supervisors are sharing the telework evaluation form, but she does not know the extent to which that’s been happening. She said that it may be an issue that supervisors and staff should work cooperatively to maximize opportunities for telework, for example, by doing some jobs across divisions (example, mail processing).

Jed said MAPE wants to see a draft of the appeal process, and Denise agreed that would be possible. Denise said an employee who is disputing the telework evaluation should take the same form and fill it out with their own answers in preparation for an appeal – even though the appeal structure does not exist yet.

Barb said management won’t create a collective bargaining right about telework, but the appeals process is being created to create fairness, consistency, and an acknowledgment that this is new territory the DNR is dealing with.

Jed said there is disagreement between supervisors and staff over exactly what employees do, and how they do it, and how much time it takes. Often, they were not present when it was discussed or created and often have not discussed it with their supervisor or even been given a chance to review what was turned in to HR. He said MAPE will summarize these in a document and get it to management for review soon.

Denise said many positions were modified to accommodate COVID, for example, to allow people to work and not get laid off. These are changes that may change back when we move to the next phase/return to some kind of normal. These changes will have to get an honest assessment as to whether they are temporary or will exist after COVID.

The agreement does not become part of personal record. These are likely to be fluid documents. Developing an appeal process, not a grievance process. Employees can develop notes about what they would like to see in their agreements. Expect appeal process to be rolled out soon. HR hopes that there is dialog leading up to the submission of the forms. The process will hope to bring together the business needs of the agency and what the employee would like to do.

Concerning half-day telework, Barb said the supervisors would be able to offer half-day telework if there was a strong business need to do so. There are fiscal and productivity implications. Generally, no, people will not as a rule be teleworking for part of the day and counting travel time as work time to the workplace. There may be reasons to do so, so it is not prohibited but up to supervisor’s discretion.

Nicholas said there were reviews of telework agreements and some idea of saving office space based on telework assignments. How will space allocations be taken into consideration going forward and eliminating costs and/or directing those funds to other areas, such as more hiring? MAPE wants to know when telework assignments will be final so that members will, for example, make plans on where to live.

Barb said we are months off from linking telework to decisions about workspace. There are still changes going on and unexpected surprises with COVID 19 – it is not the right time in our view to make long-term decisions about space. We need some time in a less COVID-driven environment, let all that settle, before we think about permanent allocation of workspace. Also, DNR does not know what the legislative session will bring. Immediate needs of a couple buildings could influence permanent work assignments – those are somewhat unique.

Monica said the MOU in the works around timecoding of parents who coded for vacation time, and now they can use sick time. How will the agency be communicating this to staff, and who do they go to for questions?

Denise said there is no MOU so there is no plan as yet. If that MOU becomes effective, HR will identify payroll contacts for that. HR can’t anticipate an MOU; it will implement a plan when it is activated. Will send it out when there is concrete information.

## Second Language as part of your job

Dan asked whether second language competency can be honored with some kind of wage hike. Denise said her group has not reviewed it yet. Adam said there is no position as yet where a language other than English is required at this time. Adam said he does not know if a new policy would be needed. Contract language would take care of it, and position description would name it as an essential skill.

## Parking at Central Office

The landlord is aware of parking concerns and looking at other options. There are no plans for reduced parking at this time. When staff come back, they will need to reapply for a full parking contract if they have cancelled their current one.

The after-action functions were cancelled due to time. Jed wrote them in the after-action meeting. After Action Items

* Get them feedback on what we have heard about the creation of telework agreements
* Ask for clarification for all the related DEI teams and what their roles are so the minutes are accurate and which ones are open for application so we can determine which ones we want to ask for a seat on. (noted below)
* Ask for a M&C auto seat on the DEI Action Team and likely the Equity Change Team
* Gather wildfire topics prior to our request for a meeting.
* Provide some suggestions on parking options at CO, like sharing spaces like they do at Anderson
* Provide feedback on the Telework agreement process and what we would like to see in an appeal process

## Telework feedback to provide to HR

* Disagreement between supervisors and staff over exactly what employees do, and how they do it, and how much time it takes.
* Often there is no interactive discussion with the employee once the form has been filled out, staff frequently do not see what was submitted to HR.
* Would like to see some facilitated discussion when there is disagreement about how work can get done as we anticipate some supervisor’s stating particular tasks can only be done in the office when they have clearly been done successfully at home. We have already seen disagreements about how long it takes to perform an actual task.
* Would like to see something like the performance appraisal appeal process in that the first step is with the supervisor, then the division director and lastly someone outside of the division, not necessarily the HR director but a representative from HR.

## Clarifying the DEI related teams

* DEI Team - supervisors who report to Aisha – AAO, diversity coordinator. It is the centralized team for topics that are more departmental. *(clarify who is a member of this team as we have some of it here but probably not all)*
* Equity Change Team is responsible at policy level for advising policies in imbedding DEI in administrative practices and our policy implementation.
  + This team is required by the Governor’s office.
  + The Equity Change Team will ask for applicants but has not done so yet.
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