**MPCA Meet and Confer Quarterly Meeting 9/12/2023**

**Attendees**

Wayne Cords – MPCA Operations Assistant Division Director

Nicole Green – MCPA Chief Financial Officer

Katrina Kessler – MPCA Commissioner

Mel Markert – MPCA Meet and Confer Secretary

Kellie McNamara – MPCA HR Director

Kristin Mroz-Risse – MPCA Meet and Confer Member

Kevin Mustonen – MPCA Meet and Confer Vice Chair

Joel Peck – MPCA Meet and Confer

Rich Ransom – MAPE Business Agent

Ryan Ricci – MPCA Operations Section Manager

Shanna Schmitt – MPCA Meet and Confer Member

Kaity Taylor – MPCA Meet and Confer Chair

1. ***Introductions.***

New leadership among the Meet and Confer Team

***Updates requested:***

1. ***ER Command Pay***

* It was agreed that a better understanding of the Emergency Response workflow is needed. Wayne should be attending a meeting soon to begin mapping to processes involved with Emergency Response to better determine situations where members should be receiving the higher pay rate.

1. ***Career development conferences***

* The Meet and Confer Team heard a lot of good feedback about the Operations Division Career Development Conference. The HR team will be hosting a two-day agencywide conference on October 24th and 26th. Staff should watch for accouchements/information in PCA Today. This time there will be a focus on the Environmental Program.
* There’s a preliminary plan to host networking opportunities after the conferences.
* The Meet and Confer Team can help provide feedback about the conferences and how to break out networking sessions.
* There is no plan to host division specific conferences, but that might be an option for networking sessions.
* These opportunities will be agencywide and Operations Division can attend. There is a plan to offer these conferences again, based on interest and need of staff.
* Career development and progress can span outside of one division.
* These opportunities should help address concerns members have regarding awareness of and satisfaction with information regarding career advancement and development.

1. ***Phased retirement***

* Last time we spoke there was only one person enrolled. Has that changed and are there any updates? Can the Meet and Confer Team help with outreach?
* There is still only one person. Yes, some outreach would be good. It would be helpful to know if there is interest in the program
* The Meet and Confer Team has heard from multiple members that while they may not be of retirement age, they want this opportunity. Members also shared that they hope this opportunity is taken advantage of in order to help preserve and pass on institutional knowledge. There is an understanding that asking members to mentor other staff as they approach retirement is an additional responsibility, but that it is important.
* It is public information if anyone enrolls in the program but the Meet and Confer Team would appreciate knowing if additional people enroll in phase retirement.

1. ***Student loan reimbursement***

* Katrina and Kellie have both been getting questions and know there is interest in this program. The PCA does have a budget for the program this fiscal year. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that the pot of money is supposed to be used by all the bargaining units that have a student loan reimbursement program. There had been some thought to split this money proportionately between the unions. Work still needs to be done to determine how to split the money not only between unions, but staff applying for it. Need to determine how to keep the program equitable. There is not a specific plan to use this as a recruitment tool and will be available for current staff.
* In terms of timeline, there is money to spend this fiscal year, so there is a goal to make sure the money is spent. Instead of surveying members/staff to see if there is interest it’s probably more efficient to start taking applications.
* Whatever is decided in terms of policy and requirements around this program, it must be anticipated that funding might not always be available to continue this program. Depending on what needs the agency have funding might not be always be allocated as this is a discretionary program.
* There is a program available for staff who have paid or are working towards 120 payments on federal loans and have been a public servant for 10 years (this will not apply to private or privately consolidated loans). Meet and Confer will remind staff about this program when we talk about the reimbursement program. The forgiveness program is a great opportunity, but staff who did not work in public service before joining the agency or are recent graduates will not qualify. Please refer to <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service> for more information as not all loans qualify and there are other restrictions.
* Staff are asking a lot of questions about this and there is a lot of interest.

1. ***Length of service evaluation:***

* This is another very popular topic among members and Local 301 was able to include the topic in their recent local meeting. Leadership and HR are getting questions too.
* Requests should be sent to Roxanne Meyer. The request should include member’s resume including the relevant work experience and the amount of time they would like to be credited for. It is no longer required to obtain proof of employment of a vacation eligible position from the member’s previous employer. The previous position must still be relevant to the member’s current job. The four-year window has also been removed
* According to the contract language the additional length of service will be credited to the beginning of the next pay period of approval, not the pay period it was requested and shall not be retroactive.
* HR is looking to MMB for guidance on this process. In the meantime, members should keep sending in their requests. If changes occur or new information becomes available from MMB those updates will be communicated out.
* Meet and Confer expects there will be a decent number of requests for length of service reviews. Removing the 4-year window will allow staff who had related employment prior to the four years of employment with PCA will be able to get credit for that work, where they were unable to before. For example, someone who worked for the agency for over a decade could leave the agency for 5 years, return, and not get credited for the 15 years of service.
* It was noted the opportunity to seek additional credit for length of service is and has been included in the first day paperwork for eligible positions.

1. ***MAPE update:***
   1. ***Upcoming listening sessions on engagement survey topics***
      1. In the next 4-6 weeks the Meet and Confer Team plans to hold listening sessions about 3 topics of interest stemming from the Employee Engagement Survey. The team plans to report back at the December quarterly meeting. Topics include: Communication, Accommodation, and Recognition.
         1. Communication: What does communication up and down the chain look like? How does it impact member’s work and general inclusion at the agency. As an example, many members were/are unaware the agency is considering a name change.
         2. Recognition: We appreciate and enjoy the opportunity the Achievement Awards present, but what else does recognition mean to members and what can it look like going forward?
         3. Accommodation: There is a lot the agency has already done inline with ADA accommodation, but what can be done beyond ADA requirements and general accommodation? How can the agency expand on inclusion through accommodation?
   2. Concerning employee engagement survey communication and the exploration of an agency name change.

* It is unclear how each division distributes information like the engagement survey results. The information is given to the division directors, and they proceed from there, meaning some information could be distributed differently in each division.
* There is particular interest from leadership in thoughts surrounding the potential name change. If employees have ideas or if Meet and Confer polls their member’s that information can be shared with Katrina.
* Many staff missed the announcements as they occurred over social media directed towards citizens of Minnesota and not a direct announcement specific to staff. The information in PCA Today was not clear that one of the suggestions was a name change.
* With a prior name change request the agency was also looking to change to a department. At the time we had a citizen board and could not become a department. There doesn’t seem to be a big distinction between agency and department as we were always at cabinet level.
* When we conduct these listening sessions Meet and Confer has been requested to ask members for specifics concerning these topics? Is there someone they specifically want more communication from? Is it difficult to communicate up the chain, and why? What about recognition would make them feel more recognized? Do members want more trinkets? Are the awards helpful?