

# MEET & CONFER MINUTES



**Date:** January 24, 2023

**Time:** 1pm

**Facilitator:** Meet & Confer

## In Attendance

**Management Attendants:** Vikki Getchell, Rachelle Schmidt, Suzanne Tillman, Sara Westly.

**MAPE Attendants:** Kristine Moody, Ann Adkisson, Joe Sullivan, Jeff Gintz, Emily Moen, Joel Kreiner, Brian Fischer, Gretchen Scharmer Nikki Engen, Chris Determan, and Nic Frey.

## Approval of Minutes

- Meet & Confer Committee
- Senior Management

## Supplemental Negotiations & Meeting Dates

**Topic:** 2023 Revenue Supplemental Negotiations and 2023 meet and confer meeting schedule.

**Background:** Pursuant to Article 32 of the contract, the employer and employee representatives of the union meet to negotiate items specific to our agency. This is in accordance to our contract that states, “the employer and the Association support a cooperative relationship to move toward a relationship of greater trust and respect,” and “in order to promote and foster a cooperative relationship, the parties agree to establish a joint Statewide and Local Labor-Management Committees/Meet and Confer Committee meetings to deal with mutually identified issues through problem-solving approach rather than in an adversarial climate.”

**Ask:**

*Kristine - We are formally requesting quarterly 90 min meetings for 2023 pursuant to our mutual agreement and according to Article 32 of the contract.*

*We are requesting three to four 90 min meetings prior to the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.*

*We are also requesting that those with executive decision-making privileges be present at each of the scheduled meetings.*

**Rachelle** – I will work with Michelle to get the ball rolling on sending an email to start the process of scheduling a meeting. We also ask that both parties present their asks a week ahead of the meeting so we can have the proper people present to give input and take action on those asks.

**Kristine** – Should I do a shortened agenda prior to the meeting?

**Rachelle** – A generalized agenda would be helpful ahead of time.

**Rachelle** – Angela Smedlund will lead negotiations this time around

**Kristine** – Will people present have delegations for decisions?

**Rachelle** – I have delegated authority, anything not under our purview must go to MMB, all monetary items go through MMB, different levels depending on the issues.

## Multilingual Differential proposal

**Topic:** MAP Bilingual/Multilingual/Sign Language Pay Differential **Action:**

Informational/Decisions

**Background:** The Multilingual Pay Differential was negotiated as part of the 2021-2023 collective bargaining agreement between the State of Minnesota and MAPE. This program compensates eligible and approved employees for use of language skills other than English, in the performance of their job duties or while performing pre-approved work or services during special projects and events. A memo was release by MMB to all state agency payroll, HR, and Accounting Staff on October 26, 2021. This memo outlined the approved compensation pay and earnings codes. At the February 15 meeting, management confirmed that there are positions at Revenue that would qualify for this program.

**Ask:**

*When will the Bilingual/Multilingual/Sign Language Pay Differential go into effect? Will this include retroactive wage adjustments per the memo?*

**Suzanne** – New recruiter we hired has been focused on this, been getting input from other agencies that have already implemented it, hoping to have more info for the next meeting. We don't have a firm date because it is part of a much larger recruiting approach dependent on other agencies, can't give an estimate but I do know conversations are happening and things are moving forward.

**Vikki** – It is frustrating that things take so long but it has been worth our while to see how other agencies have implemented this.

**Kristine** – Have you pushed backpay?

**Suzanne** – We have to take the time to look at the impacts, haven't been able to do that yet.

## Budget Request – Follow Up

**Topic:** Budget update from management.

**Background:** At our last meeting in October, Sr. Management mentioned that the new CFO is pulling together budget information for the next meeting.

- *Does management have a Budget update?*

**Nick** – Our understanding is the governor is rolling out his budget today, so a bit late for this item

**Vikki** – Salaries are often not competitive, compensation is one of the number one issues with our employees, it is difficult for an agency to affect change in compensation. We've been instructed to provide professional value-added services due to budget surplus. Hoping to hire an employee experience manager to hire people to launch employee experience program. We did the equimetrics survey, we are reading through the data currently, 933 employees participated. We have 107 pages of comments.

## MDH Volunteer Recognition Bonus

**Topic:** Come to a mutual agreement incentive bonus in appreciation for employees at DOR that volunteered and or were assigned to assist MDH during the COVID crisis.

**Background:** On October 30, 2022 Minnesota Department of Health's meet and confer worked together with management to approve a monetary incentive for employees that worked hard over the COVID crisis. Recently an employee that was assigned to conduct COVID audits reached out about long term mental health concerns and whether senior management would extend the same incentive to employees at DOR. She reported that hearing heart wrenching stories about families suffering and losing members had long lasting emotional and psychological affects. Others have also reached out and reported similar experiences.

**Ask:** *We are requesting that Senior management acknowledge and honor employees that worked during the crisis by offering an achievement award to those that sacrificed to help during the COVID response. How were bonuses and or achievement awards distributed? Who qualified for the achievement award (i.e. based on hours), when was it released? Was the same amount awarded to all volunteers and was the incentive released on the same date?*

**Rachelle** – In 2020 achievement awards weren't available for any agency, end of 2021 fiscal year May/June achievement awards available again, revenue leadership made the decision these awards would be available for employees on covid redeployment. Anybody that was deployed should have gotten that award.

**Ann** – You may hear on this topic again, we are going to follow up with members to make sure they got that bonus, we do understand it was part of paycheck and people may not have noticed.

**Rachelle** – Unsure of what communications were even sent to these individuals to notify them of bonus.

**Kristine** – Employee we followed up with stated it was very traumatic and depressing work. Was there any sort of outreach/follow up done with employees.

**Rachelle** – The agency did have a redeployment manager but we didn't have a lot of information about what resources employees were provided with during their deployment to other agencies

## Telework Procedures Update

**Topic:** Go over telework procedure

**Background:** On December 21, Revenue Teleworking Procedures Roll-Out.

**Ask:**

*What changed in the drafts we were sent?*

*Why was the mandatory HR level removed with a division wants to end someone's telework agreement?*

- *We were verbally told several times that would be in there to make sure supervisors or DD's don't apply the agreement incorrectly, like as disciplinary action or to threaten employees with.*

*Is the employer-initiated process to remove telework the same for people who live 35 miles outside of their assigned work location the as it is the same for people who live within 35 miles.*

- *Does the employer understand our concern that requiring an employee to commute from Greater MN is much different that requiring an employees to commute who lives in the metro?*

**Ann** – There were some concerns, taking HR out of the procedure, requiring things to go through HR. One of the reasons we wanted that is according to policy telework can be taken away at anytime for any reason, in the past this has been done as a disciplinary measure, we don't want that to happen to people in greater MN that aren't feasibly able to telecommute to St. Paul.

**Suzanne** – Reason behind that is our attempt to create a culture shift with regards to leadership, not needing the letter of the law spelled out in every single document. Trying to have HR step out of being a babysitter for processes that should be an organizational decision/approach. We updated the communication to say that we aren't in the decision tree, if an employee is going to have their telework agreement taken away labor relations must be consulted but they aren't part of the decisions, let's rather talk about the ones that are needed/would be impactful. Having HR on every decision would be a bottleneck.

**Nic** – Is this stated on document?

**Rachelle** – Directions to supervisor it is stated that LR needs to be consulted if a teleworking agreement is to be rescinded.

**Ann** – If an employee comes to the union and feels it is a disciplinary action, we can send them to their LR rep in HR correct?

**Suzanne** – Yes, HR isn't removing themselves from the process entirely, we're just removing ourselves from the decision tree, so an HR determination doesn't have to be made for every telework agreement decision unless it is necessary. We've had a lot of management conversations on this topic to create awareness on this.

**Ann** – If it is an employer-initiated process, are you going to look at the criteria differently for people within the 35-mile distance vs people outside of it in greater MN impacted by office closures.

**Suzanne** – The element of them living in greater MN will be a part of the conversation, it isn't realistic for someone in Duluth to commute to St. Paul.

**Vikki** – Caveat, that is for employees for whom offices closed, not for employees who chose to move far outside the metro after telework got implemented.

**Kristine** – MOU agreement, how is this going to work for new employees going forward, will employer be responsible for moving expenses?

**Suzanne** – How about we come back to this one, don't have an answer at the moment.

**Kristine** – This is a problem when MMB issues their one size fits all decisions. Article 19, relocation allowances. I know those were originally waived by the MOU but would new employees still be covered under this?

**Suzanne** – Do new employees fall under this MOU, we will find an answer and come back to this.

## Seniority Rosters

**Topic:** The location for employees is no longer listed on the rosters.

**Background:** During times of layoff there are implications for layoff and expenses ect.

**Ask:** *We are requesting to include the employee permanent work location.*

**Ann** – Employee's permanent work location removed from the roster, this creates complications with layoffs, we would like that brought back in because it is pertinent to their bumping rights.

**Suzanne** – It was unintentional it came off, we are looking at the seniority roster to see how we can streamline it, we are looking at adding location back into it. We did add location as an option on the teleworking form as well.

## Telework Equipment Confiscations

**Topic:** Printers are being confiscated from out of state work group 2.

**Background:** We were informed by employees that printer are being taken away from the out of state group 2. Division management claims that they no longer need printers to conduct normal business. Employees claim they need these for scanning receipts for travel and printing off material for clients.

**Ask:** *What equipment is going to be removed from employees going forward? What process should employees take when equipment is required to do the job? Who determines what positions and or workloads require equipment?*

**Suzanne** – There has been a lot of conversations around data privacy and shifting away from papers/printers to online modes of work to prevent physical documents from being around home/work locations. The division leadership makes these decisions but this needs to occur with consideration around how this impacts employees and what can be done to alleviate these impacts.

**Chris** – Travel status receipts, can not longer scan receipts, working with paper documents from taxpayers we need to scan those into our e-audit folders.

**Suzanne** – Have we had those conversations with the supervisors? I'm curious what they are saying.

**Chris** – direct supervisor doesn't have anything on this

**Suzanne** – We'll go back to the divisions and get additional info.

## Telework Employees Required to Live in MN

**Topic:** New job postings now have language that states that all teleworking employees are required to live in Minnesota or a bordering state in a county along the Minnesota state line.

**Background:** Due to the specialization of the work employees do at our agency, it has been a long-standing practice to employ potential job candidates in other states/locations to better represent the communities that they serve. Limiting potential job candidates to only Minnesota residence and or those that directly live on the border weakens the candidate pool and segregates teams already established in their respective locations outside of MN from new hires within.

*Why was this restriction put into place?*

**Suzanne** – These are for teleworkers, this is in a grey area between remote and teleworking with remote being an MMB designation. It doesn't mean we won't hire people out of state but they will have a different designation. The convergence between remote and teleworking, conversations with MMB are trying to figure this out going forward.

**Rachelle** – Telework policy states person who teleworks has to reside within the state of Minnesota, St. Paul is their permanent location.

**Chris** – is dividing line remote employees are outside the state and teleworking employees are inside MN?

**Suzanne** – It could evolve over time but that is generally the way it is right now.

**Kristine** – Issue people has is it muddies and makes things complicated when factoring expenses, figuring out mileage etc can get complicated.

**Rachelle** – prior to pandemic teleworkers didn't exist, MMB rolled out remote worker and teleworker policies, this will have to be addressed, everyone who Revenue believes is a teleworker will be asked to fill out a telework agreement, there are people who think they are remote workers but are not.

**Ann** – We can connect with you further, the telework stuff is going to stay on the agenda

## Former Remote Now Telework

**Topic:** Positions that were formally remote are now being required to be posted under the telework policy.

**Background:** An employee reached out to the meet and confer team notifying them that positions that have historically always been remote are now being required to be posted under the telework policy. The specifics of the position require that the employee travel across a county and ensure that county assessors are compliant with state law. The employees rarely go into the office and there would never be an instance when an employee under this position would work from Stassen.

**Ask:** *What positions qualify for remote work? Why are remote work positions now being listed as telework when a requirement of the job is that they live within the counties they are assigned? Is guidance being provided to supervisors on how to post remote worker positions?*

**Suzanne** – Remote status is an MMB designation, it was submitted to MMB for approval and was denied. We can hire people for those areas with Stassen as a homebase but they can work out there. It has to be a highly specialized role and can they find that in the state of Minnesota. We can find them in the state of MN, it isn't something that can only be found in that geographic area.

**Kristine** – What is their problem with having home office listed as primary work location?

**Suzanne** – Ultimately it isn't our decision, it is MMB, don't want to put words into their mouths

## Differential Tables

**Topic:** Differential tables are missing Chicago and Seattle locations.

**Ask:** *We request that these be review by both employer and meet and confer team to ensure accuracy and be included in supplemental negotiations.*

**Nic** – Is the Chicago auditor getting a differential?

**Rachelle** – Yes, they are

## MN Veterans Training/Apprenticeship Program Opt-In

**Topic:** Upon the expiration of the hire freeze, we were told on the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting that management would begin the implementation of this program.

**Background:** The agency can receive \$2,000 to hire and retain veterans through this program; \$1,000 upon hiring the veteran after the eligible veteran has applied for the benefit, and \$1,000 after a year of training. This program benefits the men and women that have served our county and provides a pathway to hire more veteran employees. Management stated that they plan to hire staff to be responsible for partnering with community partners, including this program and implementation. Additional information can be found here:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/employment/ojtapprenticeship.jsp>

**Ask:** Last meeting we were told that HR hired a recruiter with knowledge of this program. When can we expect to see this program become available to veterans applying to our agency?

**Suzanne** – Recruiter has looked into it, has been working to get partnership with DLI, sounds like there are a few things that need to happen to get it running, progress is being made, not exactly sure what those things are but DLI needs to be part of the process.

## Veterans Preference

**Topic:** To ensure that MN Statute 43A.11 Subd. 9 is being followed.

**Background:** A veteran applied for a position and did not receive a response from HR. There were concerns that HR was not implementing MN Statute 43A.11 Subd. 9, *“If the appointing authority rejects a member of the finalist pool who has claimed veteran's preference, the appointing authority shall notify the finalist in writing of the reasons for the rejection.”* Management responded that, “we conducted a review of our current staffing process and discovered areas of opportunity for improvement to close potential gaps. Since this review, we have revised our process to ensure full compliance of MN Statute 43A.11 requirements.”

**Ask:** *Can we see a copy of these updated procedures?*

**Rachelle** – That piece is just one component of overall hiring document, not something we share outside of hiring process. I can specifically tell you what that process is, before we let supervisor contact and they didn't have access to info on status, now all candidates will receive info from HR letting them know the status of the interview. That small piece of the hiring process, HR has taken it back and will be contacting the candidates going forward, that was implemented in December.

## Next Meeting

Open for Supplementals, Stassen

Motion to adjourn was made and passed at 2:30pm.