

# MEET & CONFER MINUTES



**Date:** 10.28.2021

**Facilitator:** Meet & Confer Chair

## In Attendance

MAPE: Kristine Moody, Nic Frey (Staff), Joe Sullivan, Ann Adkisson, Emily Moen, Brian Fischer, Karin Harris (Speaker), Dan Heitzman (Speaker)

Management: Alyssa Haugen, Yia Her, Sara Westly, Lee Ho, Angela Smedlund

## Reallocation Backpay: Kristine

Kristine - Any updates on data request?

Yia - Yes, we are still gathering the data. Regarding the number of days for approved back pay, we want more clarification. We don't currently track this.

Kristine - Confusion on how many days they are approved for backpay after reallocation. Trying to figure out if there is a set date or depends on when paperwork submitted/approved.

Yia - I'll figure out how we would provide that, it will be difficult to gather this data back to 2016

Kristine - Maybe just disclose the formula or set date that backpay calculated back to, that might just be enough.

## Office Closure: Nic

Nic - We just heard today about office closures at Ely, Mankato, and St. Cloud

Alyssa - We had a meeting this morning with impacted employees, moving the St. Cloud and Mankato offices to virtual workspaces. In Ely we're moving to virtual as well, so not continuing Ely 1 location lease, but maintaining Ely 2. For Mankato and St. Cloud slightly different process. Next week the project team will convene to discuss what this process will look like. We haven't yet determined when we will move out but leases for Mankato and St. cloud are continuing through the winter next year.

Nic - For the people in St. Cloud and Mankato they will be assigned to Stassen as remote workers?

Alyssa - Yes, permanent telework employees with home base in Stassen. Those will be separate meetings to work through.

Nic – Do you know what the MMB policy is?

Yia – It's the remote worker policy, I will provide it to you

Alyssa – We want to maintain the regional presence in all these areas, this isn't meant to reduce FTE's, we want employees to be in those regions serving the customers in those regions.

Nic – What are the immediate next steps?

Alyssa – Convene the division leaders with project heads to review who needs to be a part of the process and the feedback needed, identifying proposed timelines, etc.

Nic – Our preference would be to start engaging as soon as possible to prevent time crunch

Alyssa – In the next two weeks we plan to reach out, sooner if we can

Kristine – Contract waiver MOU?

Alyssa – Yes we will work towards this, don't think it's in anyone's interest to have to post these positions, want everyone to be successful in their work.

## Office Closure MOU Follow Up: Speakers Dan and Karin

Dan – Our office was closed, an MOU was passed, none of the employees really were happy about it. The closing procedure was frustrating, were told certain things were gonna happen but from what we've seen nothing has been done, even after 6-7 months. We hope you took the time to see how we were treated and apply lessons learned to the current closings.

Karin – I've been in sales tax 28 years, love revenue, love sales tax, has been saddened, feels morale has gone down in Revenue the past few years. Happy to hear you want to support us as teleworkers. I had asked and was denied a printer. Had a scanner, MNIT spent about 10 hours trying to set it up, not successfully set up. We asked for a travel policy that outlines covered expenses in writing, we have become untrusting after this. We asked we be given equipment if needed, only equipment we have was what we took from the office. We ask for due process in cancelling of telework agreements. I've received many IMs from people that are scared from meetings about St. Cloud etc office closures.

Alyssa – I would like more clarification on people scared, I can't control that an MOU is required due to contract language. We want to meet and communicate with employees every step of the way. Troubled that nearly 2 years into telework environment people are afraid. Am troubled to hear this and really important that we take care of each other as a revenue community, at end of day we've seen everyone working successfully in this model, troubled that people are scared and feel they are treated poorly.

Kristine – Karin could you expand on fears?

Karin – We work from a very different environment, some don't even have internet or access to it. How can I do my job if they take away MiFis. We're not 100% comfortable with the MOU and that we will have the equipment to do the jobs.

Kristine – One fear is telework termination, no way to challenge it, no just cause. Difference in how it affects someone in St. Paul vs someone in Mankato to drive into office. Is this reasonable?

Treatment is unequal due to different locations of employees, outstate employees have a disproportionate threat to their job.

Ann – During the MOU process there were promises made to do everything possible to work with them. We understand if you have nothing to do with MOU process, but their offices were closed so long ago and nothing is being done to help them.

Nic – The MOU process was triggered by management’s decision to close offices, not the contract.

Alyssa – We’re working under the constraints of the 35 mile radius language in the contract, we see opportunity there, that’s what I’m trying to call out.

Ann – Please push at MMB yourselves as well during negotiations, it is something our negotiators pushed at as well.

Alyssa – I did and we plan to continue, it’s hard when we feel there are workable solutions at revenue that need to be addressed by statewide negotiations

Kristine – Are we allowed to bring that type of item to work around MMB policy?

Nic – Yes, we proposed at supplemental and got shot down. Another option is to designate remote workers from their homes instead of designating them from St. Paul

Ann – What’s going to happen as far as promises made with regards to equipment, reimbursement, and due process of telework agreement?

Yia – We are still working on procedures, MMB has pushed out timeline on returning employees. We want to create process that covers all employees whether they remain TC or come into office. Travel policy is still in work too, depends on target date of returning employees. We have to do this in partnership with FMD who administers this policy. We can get a draft out as soon as we can but FMD would have to input on that.

Nic – 7 months ago, what are the immediate next steps.

Yia – With travel policy, once draft is created has to be run by Sr management and MMB, etc.

Nic – Estimated timeline?

Yia – No, will have to discuss with FMD director and my team

Ann – Auditors are conducting some field visits, there is a need for equipment

Alyssa – MiFis, internet isn’t something the agency is providing to employees, not a long term solution. We are asking divisions to maximize virtual interactions with customers vs field visits.

## **GI Bill – Follow Up: Speaker Joel Kreiner**

Joel – We’ve covered this previously in January, due to hiring freeze we couldn’t move forward. I was hoping that now that the hiring freeze is over, we can have a renewed focus to implement this program.

Yia – Yes the hiring freeze is lifted, our diversity recruiter yer winder was working with this prior to pandemic, was put on pause, now that freeze is lifted we are picking this back up. Talking to other agencies that have implemented this program, hopefully once we get these pieces laid out, we can hopefully roll this out.

Kristine – Will the new diversity director be overseeing the implementation?

Yia – It would be the diversity and inclusion coordinator, currently working to fill that role.

## Code of Conduct Browsing Policy: Kristine

Kristine – We did see some changes, the items outlined in the training were great. Are we under new policy?

Yia – Yes

Kristine – In training saw it referenced old policy, needs updating

Yia – Yes, we'll look at that

Kristine – Definition of poor business reason vs good business reason

Yia – Training outlined examples “such as” etc.

Kristine – What if taxpayer called, gave wrong number, employee clicks into wrong account, is that a poor business reason?

Yia – part of training did encourage employees to address those items with supervisors to clarify what happened, employee needs to make extra effort to address those

Ann – For clarification's sake, just because collections accesses many more accounts, there is a business need to access account, but sometimes will access other accounts in order to narrow down the correct one for research cases, is that a good business reason? Is that when we need to notify supervisor?

Sara – All of those accesses wouldn't come up as questionable, as they are the same name, a connection to the correspondence. I hear loud and clear despite how many cases people are accessing may be worth time to have a procedure these accesses are logged via CRM notes. There isn't one procedure that could apply to every position using Gentax because so many different positions do very different things. Probably worth implementing procedures like that.

Kristine – An example of a poor business reason is “a mistake”

Kristine – New policy outlines how mgmt. will determine severity, what are the levels of discipline, is there a structure for that?

Yia – Every browsing case is different, and based on prior employee disciplines, different levels of discipline based on facts and circumstances. We don't take into consideration prior discipline.

Kristine – So employee with clean history, doesn't matter when determining discipline.

Yia – Depends on situation

Kristine – Do we know who the disclosure officer is?

Yia – A disclosure officer is Greg Steiner in appeals/legal

## **Workplace Hazard in Ely – Follow up: Emily**

Emily – Update on when carpet is going to be replaced, I have new photos to show the situation. Garbage cans placed haphazardly around carpet, pictures of where carpet is lifting up

Sara – Admin arranged someone to go out, they are aware of it, is this new damage?

Emily – Did they come out and replace carpet squares?

Sara – No, I believe they taped some areas down. We'll bring this forward again

## **Required Work Hours Outside of Scheduled Time: Joe**

Joe – Received a comment that employees in criminal would appreciate more notice when scheduling early morning searches to prepare and make arrangements. They currently receive a few days' notice, searches require they typically leave the office at 6am, require them to get up as early as 4am.

Alyssa – We'll take this back to the division to discuss

## **Next Meeting**

12.08.2021 | 10:30am, Teams