

MEET & CONFER MINUTES



Date: 7/27/2022

Time: 1pm

Facilitator: Meet & Confer

In Attendance

Management: Sean Early, Suzanne Tillman, Angela Smedlund, Vicki Getchell, Rachelle Schmidt, Lee Ho

MAPE: Kristine Moody, Gretchen Scharmer, Brian Fischer, Ann Adkisson, Joseph Sullivan, Emily Moen, Nic Frey (Staff)

Approval of Minutes

- Meet & Confer Committee
- Senior Management

Announcements – Kristine/Nic

- Introductions for all new senior management.

Kristine – We request to schedule the rest of the year Meet and Confer meetings.

- **HR** will follow up on specific dates, thought they had sent dates for meetings, will verify invites are sent out

Nic - Request for management to provide MN Revenue budget overview updates Pete Skwira used to do, management doesn't have a familiarity with that due to turnover, Nic will check back in notes to see past examples, consisted of general financial overview of revenue budget

- **Lee** will work with Finance to see what we can do
- **Kristine** – we get a lot of questions about if we have a surplus and what we can do; answer that it does not necessarily reflect DOR budget
- **Lee** – that is true; we are looking at what is going to happen with the election; there may be a shrinking of government

Telework Procedures and Overview - Kristine

Topic: On February 15, 2022, management said they planned to roll out this policy by the end of February (after approved by senior management).

Background: During MOU negotiations we were provided a draft of the Telework Procedures and Overview policy specific to Agency needs based on concerns from employees impacted by office closures. Employees approved the MOU with the understanding that that this policy was to go into place shortly thereafter.

Kristine – Status of policy in place for employees whose offices were closed and need to come into office, travel policies, reimbursement policies clarification etc. Wanted to follow up, Yia Her had mentioned in prior meeting policy would be rolled out

Rachelle - Policy approved by MMB, still working on Revenue specific procedures. Got overshadowed by Future of the Workplace projects. Now actively working on updating procedure document, most likely won't change draft you had received. Working on electronic form as well, taking a little longer. No timeline yet but we're actively working on it, rough ETA of early fall this will be completed.

MN Veterans Training/Apprenticeship Program Opt-In - Gretchen

Topic: We were told on the October 28th meeting with the hiring freeze ended, management would start the implementation process for this program.

Background: On the October 28th meeting, a guest speaker (veteran) spoke on behalf of veteran employees for our agency (roughly 12) to engage in the MN Veterans Training/Apprenticeship program. This program would pay the employer compensation for every veteran employee that qualifies for the program. This would also ensure that our agency supports the employment of veterans.

Gretchen – Looking for update on status of the program.

Suzanne – We lost recruiter role due to turnover, when new hire comes in they will be responsible for partnering with community partners, including this program and implementation. Hopefully will fill this position very soon.

Bi-Lingual Stipend - Joe

Topic: Management indicated that they were partnering with MMB to see how it would be applied for different languages. Management was planning to review MMB's guidance.

Background: On the February 15 meeting, management confirmed that there are positions at Revenue that would qualify for the Bi-Lingual Stipend.

Rachelle – New to contract this year, we are interested in this, will dedicate some business functions to it based on business needs.. Haven't had a chance to review what units would have this need and what the business need is; need to determine how to rate competency related to speaking, writing and reading. Also want to use as recruitment and retention tool. No ETA on this currently.

Suzanne – These are very important things, and we are working hard on getting the HR team fully staffed.

Removal of Hot Spots - Gretchen

Topic: There are concerns about employees having their hot spots taken away.

Background: This topic was brought up on the 04/07 & 01/27 meetings when some employees expressed concerns about not being able to afford internet. Does our agency plan to take away hot-spots and how is our agency planning to assist employees that cannot afford internet?

Gretchen – concerns about having hotspots taken away, how does the agency plan to assist employees who can't afford internet?

Rachelle – Were these meetings specific to a division? Not familiar with them

Gretchen – unsure, though we've had more than one employee approach us with these concerns

Kristine – If job requires an employee to provide internet access, will that be included in the job description?

Rachelle – Meeting about MiFis issued to field auditors, we took many of those back because the auditors weren't going into the field, sounds like what you're referring to is agency provided internet hot spots to employees during stay-at-home orders early in pandemic. If we do have employees using hotspots utilizing internet for work, we will be determining who has them and then recapturing them. Internet is a part of the operating costs if employees are teleworking. One of the first questions that prospective employees ask is if they can telework and it is discussed with them. The expectation is that employees provide their own internet.

Kristine – so for returning auditors is there a pathway for them to get hotspots so they don't have to check them out when going into the field?

Rachelle – we're not going to issue permanent hotspots for something that will be used only when employees in the field. It doesn't make financial sense; they will be checked out when needed in the field.

Lee and Vikki – Confirmed this is their understanding.

Kristine – do you know how many hotspots are available? Are there enough to cover for all employees requiring them to do their jobs?

Rachelle – We will need to look into it. We will need to determine how many there are for each division or if it's an agency wide count.

Position Caps and Employee Retention – Kristine / Nic

Topic: An employee came forward with a concern with capping out at the top of his job class step increase.

Background: He is an RTS Principle and has worked for the department for over 10 years. There is no higher position description within his job class and management positions haven't turned over in his time at the state. Is there a process in which he could continue career advancement and create a pathway for fellow employees as well? Taking Division budgets and number of each job class in consideration, when a job opens, it creates a bottle neck where multiple people are already doing the higher-level work, but limited positions are available. This creates turnover and employee dissatisfaction.

Kristine: no pathway forward for principals who max out on the pay scale. Any thought for process for maxed out people to continue to advance within their career?

Suzanne: This is an issue across the agency, it is something that is important to us and we are looking at a pathway program to help cultivate growth of employees facing this, it is a big

program encompassing overall job experience, no ETA but it is a high priority. We don't want people leaving because there aren't opportunities to progress.

Rachelle – Also have leadership academy and other leadership programs, we would encourage them to apply to. Also look outside your division, other areas do have supervisor positions that open.

Brian – Do you feel a degree is absolutely necessary for our jobs? Are we going to factor in experience as well for certain jobs?

Vikki – Definitely something we are looking at, have had some positions already where there is a degree or an experience equivalency. We know we need to be as flexible as possible. Tight job market and we want to be an employer of choice.

Nic – One of the ideas this person had is creating a new classification such as an RTS Principal 2, we did do that recently with MNIT with IT consultant positions, it is an option that we can bargain over as well.

Kristine – Also the individual mentioned he loves his job and doesn't really want to use his skills and knowledge in a supervisor roll where they can't be utilized. Also a bottleneck effect, too many principals going for the same jobs over time creates animosity.

Unused Equipment - Brian

Topic: What is going to happen with all unused equipment?

Background: With the agency remodel, a question has come up of what will happen to all unused equipment? There are some concerns that employees don't have the necessary equipment to do their jobs, not wanting to see good equipment go to waste, we want to ensure employees needs are being met.

Suzanne – In this remodel, anything that still meets needs of the agency will continue to be used, anything that doesn't meet the requirements or if it's time to sunset, is dealt with by a third-party vendor for recycling, donations, etc.

Suzanne – If someone purchased something for agency to use they should contact management to come get it, at this time there isn't a thought to have a sell off or auction of equipment.

Brian – Refrigerators, all work good condition, is there an opportunity to get these for employees who purchased them in groups for their work areas?

Suzanne – At this time will be automatically donated, however specifically with the fridges, if they are in good working order they may be reused due to employees coming back, but otherwise will be donated or given to employees who had purchased them. If there is someone who purchased something for the agency to use, they should reach out so we can connect them to the group so they can get it back. No plan for auctioning items off.

Brian – The fridges work. Will those be donated? Will there be a message that goes out? Will there be a way to determine someone to take them?

Suzanne – We really don't know what it's going to look like. If there is something that is in working order, it may be moved to another area.

Rachelle – State does have an inventory surplus process and procedures. If it is still useful, it will go to a central location and then is auctioned off. That is where the functioning equipment will go. We are aware that some employees purchased items, those divisions should work with facilities

to see what the interest is and then lots drawn out of a hat. There are certain assets groups of employees donated where lots were drawn for the responsible employees to take them home.

Joint Labor Management Group - Nic

Nic – Thoughts of reestablishing joint labor committee with all the unions?

Rachelle – Just happened once, we are not opposed to that, but need to have time for planning and to ensure that all agenda items go across all unions. Maybe in the next 6 months or so there will be more from Management that would be relevant to all unions.

Vikki – Was that focused on covid?

Rachelle – No, that meeting was just something that was put into place and covid just became the priority. We are open to having those meetings again, useful for items that cross all bargaining units. I will work with Michelle to get new meetings scheduled. Once we get those dates established, can we agree that we will mutually provide agenda topics so we can have a robust meeting.

Next Meeting

TBD

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