

# Minutes - Meet and Confer 5/13/20 (moved from 4/15)

**MAPE attendees:** Jed Becher and Nicholas Snavely (co-chairs), Kristi Coughlin, Megan Benage, Harland Hiemstra, Monica Weber, Martha Vickery, and MAPE business agent Lyz Martin.

**DNR management attendees:** Assistant Commissioner Barb Naramore; Denise Legato, HR director; Adam Browning, HR labor relations representative, Colleen Schmidt, ethics officer, Matt Olinger

DNR management representatives requested that we put the issue of locating the complaint vs. harassment in the workplace information (i.e., how to file any kind of a complaint) on the agenda up front, because Colleen Schmidt, who serves as the ethics officer, was at the meeting with us. Colleen offered an explanation of what is out there and how the information came to be organized the way it is organized now.

Colleen said that the “conflict management toolbox” was put in place as part of the culture of respect process for all staff back in 2015, and that the information was presented in a particular order to help staff with conflict management in a step-by-step way. She said a group of 17 people decided on the content.

Jed said that there should be a look at what is working well and not well, and that MAPE has heard from staff that there is difficulty in figuring out the appropriate type of complaint to file, that there are no FAQs about investigation, and nothing explaining what staff can expect (i.e., whether staff will hear back in a certain number of days or weeks, and what to do if that does not happen).

Barb said that there might be some way of having the investigation steps standardized and written so that employees have a better idea of what is going on while they wait.

Harland said that when matters are left without comment or resolution for too long, people speculate and make up their own narrative.

Megan said she looked for the sexual harassment information on the intranet, but could not find it in the employee toolkit; rather, it is under policies and procedures.

Colleen said that if there is something missing there should be a conversation about it. Adam said that the group may be able to understand it better if there are some specific instances to point to.

Adam said that MAPE was going to look into what were specific needs in the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) policy. Megan replied that MAPE has done this and rather than put the energy into extensive planning on what changes are needed to make the PPL explanations and instructions more understandable, she would prefer working in a small group. Adam said that it would be helpful to know exactly what problems need to be solved. He said he would be willing to serve on a small group to work on this.

Colleen said the Organizational Health Team is now the umbrella group over Culture of Respect, and she could look at how to make updates to the investigations team’s area of the website.

**Paid Parental Leave discussion**

Megan also presented on the Paid Parental Leave policy and issues with information outreach and website organization related to it. She said that she and Monica went through the HR site and took screen shots that illustrate how the information is spread out over several areas. She said she made several wrong selections trying to find where a user can look up the policy. She said she found it finally under Benefits. She said it is buried under a subcategory “Other Employee Benefits,” and suggested it should have a place that is more obvious.

Among other suggestions, she said they recommend HR contact people be listed at the bottom of the page, to conform with how most web pages are structured these days. She also pointed out that the policy contains a link to a PPL fact sheet, which contains hyperlinks that are all broken. She also suggested that the Women’s Economic Security Act could be linked: it is cited on the PPL policies as explained on other state department websites, but not this one.

The fixes on the website as suggested by Megan and Monica are organized chronologically, under the subheads “Before Leave,” “During Leave,” and “When You Return to Work.” She also suggested linking other resources that may be needed in conjunction with PPL: pre-tax benefits, metro pass, etc.

Adam said that he has not heard of a specific need for this kind of change in the website. Denise commented that employees get information about leave not only from the website, but by working with HR throughout their leave.

Megan replied that she is thinking not only of employees who are taking a leave, but also those who want to plan for a leave, to review what they would need to do in order to take one. Megan said that doing small things like reorganizing a website are “easy wins” for DNR – not difficult to do, and would provide a wide benefit to all employees, not just MAPE people. She added that there is the individual approach that all employees need from HR, and also a universal approach so that the department can be clear in writing about its policies.

Barb remarked that there is a balance to be struck between providing general information and supplying the employee with specific information related to their situation.

**Pandemic communications**

Megan said that communications during the crisis in general have been pretty good, but said there could be more work on the return-to-work process. Information about returning to work has been shared unevenly across regions. Some are better than others.

Barb said communications will be through all-staff communications, wireside chats, and also information sent out through managers and supervisors. CMO has been attentive to the need for frequent information, but they are still in an extraordinary incident response situation, and things are changing daily. It has been difficult to keep up.

Nicholas said that there is some confusion about what services are what priority. Some critical activities have “opened up” in certain areas, but there is uncertainty what priority they are and in what order they should be done.

Barb said that divisions will be relying in part on staff to tell them what the highest priority activities should be as field work becomes possible again.

Harland said that formal communications by DNR to the public have been very carefully thought out. Not so much so for internal direction for staff. Internally, he said, he would give DNR a C-minus. Kristi said that MAPE professionals want to hear from the decision makers on what decisions are being made and why. That information is lacking.

Nicholas said that at other agencies, MAPE is represented on return-to-work planning, but there is no designee from MAPE DNR Meet & Confer Committee on DNR return-to-work planning. MAPE requests that a DNR Meet & Confer Committee agreed upon member be assigned by management to serve as a designee for DNR’s return-to-work planning efforts. We ask for this connection to the representative as they need to report back regularly with the MAPE DNR Meet & Confer Committee to ensure adequate communication is occurring back and forth with MAPE. Denise volunteered to get MAPE questions about this to the Incident Command Team that is supervising return-to-work activities, and Megan said MAPE accepts and looks forward to more direction on this.

**Action item:**

Appoint a small (MAPE/DNR management) group to reorganize the Paid Parental Leave policy and look into improvements to information about how to file a complaint and what to expect during that process.