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# July 2023 DNR Meet and Confer Meeting Minutes

## July 19, 2023, 2:00 pm-4:00 pm

## Meeting overview (5 minutes)

* Review agenda and time allotments
* Review action item spreadsheet and status of tasks
* Update spreadsheet and de-highlight items

# Old Business

## Wildfire—Fire Boots (everyone’s favorite subject)

* **Guidance on boots** – Still waiting on guidance from Forestry. Had heard internal rumblings are saying DNR safety became involved and said fire boots are required safety item and Division needs to provide to employees. Employees and Area supervisors are being told to wait on boots. What is the status?
  + **FORS approved $175 reimbursement for fire boots. By 5/15/2023, Denise was going to was send an email about how to submit reimbursement.**
  + **Denise also set to follow up with FORS on additional boot reimbursement to meet OSHA requirements**.
* What meets the minimum standard, and what is the type of preferred brand. DNR will purchase the boots. The rate is still being set, if folks want to buy a higher value of boots, they will only be reimbursed up to the max that is yet to be set.
* Who needs to wear those boots is still TBD, it will affect multiple divisions outside of just Forestry. For those who have purchased boots, hang onto the receipts and if they have been rejected from reimbursement to send the information to Denise.
* The Opps managers have the draft of the policy, and they hope to approve on July 27th.
* Policy on safety foot ware is being updated. References state contract, is attached in the appendix, shows the vendors on the contract, there is a list of available products and price list. The contract provides a broad selection to choose from. Will purchase boots for employees under the policy. Can purchase higher cost boots but will only receive what the finalized stipend is. Stipend has not been established yet. Criteria for who needs fire boots is being driven by wildland fire and affects more divisions than just Forestry. Those criteria need to be established and communicated to staff. If boots have been purchased, staff should hang on to receipts to submit once everything is settled. If staff have been denied, contact Denise Legato. Denise did not think the fire business manual clarified who needs to wear boots at what point. Last word Denise had was that the opps managers have a draft with the hope it would be approved at their meeting July 27th. Denise will follow-up to see what happened at that meeting.

## Naturalist Recap

* Management met with PAT leadership on May 2nd sharing MAPE concerns. PAT was forming a group to discuss more internally on next steps.

## Student Loan Forgiveness Program request

* Have any decisions have been made? Any reactions to the proposal that MAPE provided?
* Have not taken any further steps on this topic. Is really a tool for recruitment and retention. Have not done a cost benefit analysis that supports what management feels would be costly program to undertake.
* DNR is hiring a recruiter. As DNR’s recruitment program dives into workforce planning, there is a chance loan forgiveness might be considered at that time if gaps, pockets, or areas where it could be a useful tool. Have not started the hiring process yet. That person needs to learn the state system and DNR so it would take a while before that person would be up to speed to start looking at tools available to DNR.
* Barb added that the question of equity would also have to be a part of the consideration process if any type of loan forgiveness was to move forward.
* Recruiter will be working out of HR and working closely with the DEI team.

# New Business

## Equity adjustment requests

* MAPE is hearing that there is a backlog and some staff frustration around getting these approved.
* Could management share a little more about how these are processed and how decisions are made?
* How many have been requested in the last fiscal year? Please provide these numbers prior to or at our meeting.
* How many have been completed, granted, or denied in the last fiscal year?
* Matt provided an update, received five requests that were put under the category of equity adjustment. Have approved one so far. Have not denied any so far per the new language in the contracts. Staff may think something is an equity adjustment when it is actually something else, such as a reallocation request.
* Denise clarified that HR is taking a cautious approach with this process. Due to the equity aspect of this, HR needs to look at the individual request in context within the same salary level and around that requester. That request could have potential to cause other inequities or cause HR to look at other people’s pay around the requestors position. So it is not so easy to look at them one by one individually.
* As HR receives them, they need to do a full analysis on the individual and any related impacts. They must go up to MMB for review and approval or denial.
* MAPE is asked to send names to Matt to make sure they have had communication.

1. **Two-way performance reviews of supervisors and staff--Megan**

* MAPE’s ask is to form a group with management and MAPE to explore this further
* Essentially MAPE is looking for some way to have a feedback loop from direct reports to upper management about their supervisor. MAPE feels this could be a valuable way to shed light on potential problems in various workgroups before they become larger / bigger issues.
* See new letter being added to the DLI supplemental this round of negotiations.
* MAPE asked to form a collaborative working group.
* The DLI supplemental language is below:
* Pursuant to discussions in the 2023 – 2025 Supplemental Bargaining between the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (“DLI”) and MAPE, the DLI agrees to review and discuss procedures related to mid-point check ins on probationary employees as well as opportunities for supervisor feedback from employees. DLI will convene a workgroup to discuss performance review forms which will include a MAPE designee whenever practicable. These topics will be a standing agenda item for the Meet and Confer throughout the 2023-2025 Collective Bargaining Agreement.
* Denise asked MAPE to identify who to have in a meeting with Adam to form a work group on the topic. Is MAPE looking for a neutral party to go outside the organization? What is the objective? Need to really clarify what we are trying to solve for HR. What are the issues? MAPE will flesh out more for HR what we are trying to address prior to the first meeting.
* <http://files-intranet.dnr.state.mn.us/user_files/1872/employee_prep_for_performance_review.pdf> might provide some ideas for the workgroup.

1. **Communication classification study**

* What is the status of the MMB redesign of the Communication class series? This is about positions that have responsibilities for communications. Predominance of the work that is related to communication. The study was pretty broadly defined by MMB, a broad net was cast at DNR. Marketing, web design, social media, communications. Divisions were asked to identify those positions and submit PDs. HR went back to divisions as some did not submit as many as expected. Have a total 90ish PD’s that they now must review. Have a team working on these. HR has categorized them at this point. Need to decide as how this works across all divisions. Does include some SPA’s as there are not 90 in the IO series across the agency. Looking at tasks, across agency and at the classification series. View it as a big deal project. Team is framing this and developing a timeline, don’t have an estimate yet as the scoping isn’t complete yet. Will provide an estimated timeline before the next meeting.
* Will there be an appeal process – believe there is a process outlined by MMB but will need to check on that.
* If someone or group was missed, they can submit a reallocation request once the study is finished.

1. **New contract language Q&A**

* Vacation accrual is more expansive in the new contract. Strikes the 4 years.
* HR can’t do anything until contract ratification is final and instruction come from MMB. Have not communicated anything to anyone about language in the tentative agreement.
* As for the cap, it is on the project list to evaluate the cost implications of changing that cap and looking at how to make a recommendation to the commissioner’s office. Would need to look at the entire workforce, a very manual process. It would be another very large project for HR. Have it on their list to do analysis to make a recommendation to CMO.
* Meal reimbursements – would there be a process to make an adjustment with submissions that happened before the contract goes into effect? Would need to look at the terms of the contract to see if the wording allows for retroactive or upon effective date. Dan noted that unless things are expressly bargained to be retroactive, they are not by default.