

Recruiting and Retention Task Force
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 - 11:00 AM

Joe Pete Wilson - Chairman

Chairman Wilson called this task force to order at 12:04 pm with the following in attendance: Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland, Ken Hughes, Jim Monty, Matt Stanley, Joe Pete Wilson, Mike Mascarenas, Jen Mascarenas, Chelsea Merrihew, Joe Keegan and Jim Dougan.

Also present: Dina Garvey

WILSON: Okay, we'll try and get and started here to keep this day moving a little bit.

I'll call us to order. Thank you for sticking around on this long conversation filled day, but the only thing on the agenda today, is a put a draft summery report and recommendations, that I really wanted to just review briefly, not go through it line by line, but ask that you give some feedback. You know what do we need to change, what did we leave out, what did we not highlight enough. So, just real quick; the first part is just a little part of summary of the work that's been done, but the first recommendation is to sustain this effort, this mission needs a home and as Ken said earlier, the Personnel Committee seems to fit that. So, that the Personnel Department and then the Personnel Department might take on some of the operational aspects of this. So, again, having it in the Personnel Committee would make sense for a line or reporting. That would also give a committee channel for the County Manager or Budget Officer to make sure that we're funding, planning, you know, keeping this mission alive by building it into our operations. So, that's recommendation one, in a nutshell.

The second is marketing. We need to market and we need to do it professionally and this marketing recommendation is really right out the of the draft plan that everyone reviewed after we got some help from North Country Community College and Kyle Johnston there, who handles the type of outreach that we were looking at. So, that really hasn't changed, recommendation number two, from the draft-marketing plan that we all reviewed.

Recommendation Number 3 is having a communications and recruitment specialist. Someone who can not only manage our marketing, manage our partnerships with the college, with CV Tech, with BOCES. The things Charlie was eluding to in our last discussion. You know, having a job fair, the work that Jim and Ken are doing, tomorrow, to start building bridges. We can't do this ad havoc. If we just keep having it based on who wants to do it, it's going to start eroding or losing focus. And this Recommendation Number Three, to have a person in charge of this would also fit in, I was hoping Shaun would be back, at the end of last year, Shaun brought up the need for communications, marketing person for the County, as well. So, what I envisioned here is this would just be an additional, you know that person we would hire would have the expertise to handle the type of marketing, communications we need to recruit and retain, as well as some of the broader county. So, we wouldn't be asking for two communications people, we'd be trying to have someone who, we're going to keep them busy with doing the recruiting and retention and also communications for the County.

And Number Five, the educational pipeline, you know, a lot of the things we've talked about, a lot of the same things we're seeing being successful, like down in Ticonderoga, that Donna Watton and Ti Alliance are doing and Ken's doing a bunch, and Jim's doing a bunch. And we really need to formalize this, the mission of it and then how it's going to fit in with the communication and

retention specialist, Personnel Department, the Personnel and Administration Committee. So, those were the recommendations that I pulled out and Ken really helped put this together. But, this is where I'm at and I'm sure I'm missing some obviously things. So, I really want some feedback and it doesn't necessarily have to be off the top of your head, right now. But, if you make some notes on this and give it back to me or email me or if you do have some thoughts right now, it would be great to hear them and I can take some notes.

HUGHES: I have just a very quick, under recommendation Number One, sustaining the effort, just for clarity, it's the Personnel and Administration Committee?

WILSON: Yup

HUGHES: I just realized that. And then under Number 3, communication and recruitment specialist, I think we want to add language in there about a PIO, Public Information Officer. I think that's what Shaun is looking for, in addition to just general communications and I had, at his request, written up a report about that to try and education the Board about where we are, where we've been and what we've done and recommendations moving forward. So, I don't know where that, I did submit it. I don't know where it went. I have a copy, but just adding public information officer to Recommendation 3, I think would be wise.

WILSON: Yeah and if you have something from that other report that you wanted to cut and paste into there, let me know.

HUGHES: Yeah, I'll reread the report. I like this, because it's just general. It sunrises and then the report goes more in depth, because you're making recommendations. So, I'm okay with that.

WILSON: Okay

HUGHES: And I'm glad to see you included the employee handbook and county hiring.

WILSON: Oh yeah, I forgot that, didn't I. Did I skip over that? And again, I wish Mike was here.

HUGHES: I'm glad to see that you had that in there.

WILSON: Oh yeah, I missed Number 4. In conversation, in talking to Mike about work he's doing and would like to do, revising and updating the employee handbook and County hiring and employment policy, I think is going to be key. If we're going to have discussions about work from home, about part-time, you know how do we, like I know Jim's talked about trying to get some retirees back, part-time. How do we start building that in, so that it fits with our Union commitments, it fits with, you know, it's consistent across the County and it gives Department Heads clearly designated tools to be creative. So, I added this, about the employee handbook and policy in support of what Mike is doing.

DEZALIA: Yea, so we have a subcommittee for that already and we met last year, I think it was 2021.

MONTY: I think it was two years ago.

WILSON: I forgot, I'm on that committee with you.

DEZALIA: And we made recommendations. I don't know that they really went any farther than that. So, I think we can have some of those subcommittee meetings, again and we'll address those and take the recommendations that have come from this committee that do exist then and maybe add some of those things to our other recommendations that we have.

WILSON: Oh, that's a great idea and you're right. I remember that and we did a lot of work and I forgot that we were on that committee. So, yeah we should resume that.

MONTY: My understanding, we submitted that to Mr. Manning who gave it to Mr. Tedford and he had it just about complete with some other things and he's now charged Mr. Tansey with it, but we also went, if you remember, last meeting, we're going to RFP for a consultant to piece everything, to try and find someone who will piece everything together for us, matching, mirroring it with the contracts and stuff for us to look at. For them to do that work, with our suggestions and I'm not sure when the RFP is due on that, but I know that we just approved that, as a Board.

DEZALIA: Yeah, Public Sector HR did a really good job of melding all our policies together on ours.

MONTY: Yeah, so I think that's going to go, fit right in to what you're looking at. But, I agree, we probably should get together and discuss it, because I'm pretty sure it was '21. It might have even been '20.

DEZALIA: There maybe some additional things we want to put in there since we've had this meeting.

MONTY: I think it might have been 2020.

WILSON: I think it was before Covid, yeah.

MONTY: I can't remember, I've only asked for it for 8 years. .

WILSON: That's a great idea, Stephanie and maybe we could sit, you know as we work this draft through a little more, we could get the three of us together, that would be great.

KEEGAN: This is great. A couple of questions and then an observation, maybe. So, is it, does the plan recommend the hiring of one individual and then this there a specialist?

WILSON: Yes, yup.

KEEGAN: The marketing would all be, the current vision is to have the marketing RFP'ed out?

WILSON: Yes, we would, we looked at what Kyle's doing and didn't feel like we had the in-house ability or the, quite enough need to dedicate one person. Is that how we see it?

HUGHES: Yeah, kind of. I mean I keep thinking about Holly. You know Holly's doing a lot of marketing for the fairgrounds and she has told me the past that it's just not, there could be more work put on her plate. So, I'm not saying that there might not be something internally, but there could be, depending on what the scope of work might end up being.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: And that's the crux. I don't know that she has the tools to do that kind of marketing. I think being able to do television ads and/or those really fancy type press flyers.

HUGHES: I apologize. I was seeing her as an internal liaison to a hired out-sourced company.

MASCARENAS: Yes, agrees.

HUGHES: I want to replicate what you guys are doing.

WILSON: We looked at the college's model and the data that you get back from that and the why you're able to tailor what you're doing. That takes a level of sophistication.

HUGHES: I want an internal person to be the liaison to that.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: Yeah

WILSON: And overseeing.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: Joe, if you could and I'm sorry I'm coming in on this late, but I was just meeting on this 5 minutes ago, which is why I'm late. We are looking to develop an RFP, we've got a couple good examples, but did you RFP to get the firm you got?

KEEGAN: I believe we did. I'll get the contract to you.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: Yeah, if you did that would be a helpful thing to see. We're trying to collect explains of RFPs. What people are using.

KEEGAN: I can't remember. Let me look and I'll share whatever we have with you.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: That would be great.

WILSON: And then you had some other points, as well?

KEEGAN: I did. The thing that we found is our communications specialist was so, it's important for them to be so tied into that marketing piece. So, that you've got that synergy of messaging across, you know whether that PIO is quite the same role. He's our PIO, he's our communications, he's doing enrollment marketing, he's doing press releases, all that kind of stuff. So, having that link of the communications specialist is important, if not a full-time job just to make sure that there's that constant flow of the same thread of messaging going through. And I was wondering if under 5, any of the educational pipeline duties could fold up under that person?

WILSON: I was hoping that. I'm hoping that we're not creating a job that's too big and with too many, that's what I was hoping though. Is that we could keep this is one person and some, like with consistent messaging, the depth of knowledge. I am hoping, but I have no idea.

KEEGAN: And we saw, was it Finance Committee, I can't remember, but you had a presentation from...

WILSON: Public Health, the ones with the videos and they're just getting ready to...

HUGHES: BRIEF

KEEGAN: So, there's a model already out there about marketing Essex County.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: And I do have that information from them in terms of who they used, the tool they used to procure those individuals.

KEEGAN: Yeah, we use them, as well.

And one last thing, Joe Pete and this is a real quick read, but a lot of seems focused on recruitment. More recruitment heavy then retention and I don't know if there's...

MASCARENAS, MIKE: You sound like Jim Dougan. Now, you're going to get him going.

WILSON: And that's a fair statement. Going through this I reflected on that quite a bit and it's so much easier to come up with ideas for recruitment than it is for retention and some of the things that we did already address. Like with the life insurance, the referral and I think when we overall the employee handbook, that might be a place. I struggled to get these bigger initiatives. Well, we worked when we looked at housing and childcare. I mean those are some of both, but you're absolutely right.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: And you're absolutely right, 100% right and there's some real reasons for that and you probably even deal with it, somewhat at the college. This year we're in a negotiation year. So many of these issues end up being contractual that you're dealing with. You know, we're at a competitive disadvantage in terms of civil service where we have a lot of different jobs that are in the same class. One area, I'll give you a for instance, in DPW, Jim, if I misspeak, tell me, but they're get the general idea. Our MEOs are say a Grade 8, well we have 13 titles that are in a Grade 8. So, if we decide that our MEOs are getting paid too little and maybe that's why we're struggling to get them, it's going to impact every Grade 8 we have. I can't arbitrary move one Grade without it impacting every Grade in/around that. So, then the Grade 10s, well, hang on a minute, I'm a Grade 10, because I have this level of education or this level of experience or I have a doctorate; right and they're not wrong. So, now it creates a domino effect where towns may only have a handful of employees, they might not even have anybody else in a Grade 8. So, it's figuring out how to do that salary structure it a little bit easier for them. I'm not saying there's not things we can do, there absolutely is. Jim and I are talking about for his particular office starting to create additional titles where movement can happen more free and easy. Where maybe we have, we haven't landed on this, but an MEO 1, and MEO 2, HEO, HEO 1, HEO 2. So, now we're rewarding people that have been here for a longer period of time and we're able to give them that shout out through title and they're automatically a Grade higher, because of that without impacting our

whole salary structure, which is 500 employees. So, there's some real reasons for that, Joe Pete, why retention's a little harder, but in your contract, you do have things such as flextime; right? We have paid leave for different things. So, I don't want to keep talking, but.

HUGHES: I have to leave in 5 minutes, unfortunately, because I have a 1:00 grant meeting, but I just wanted to remind the committee of the November 4, 2022 webinar that I attended with Ian Coyle of Livingston County, he's the administrator there, Page 2 provides a bunch of strategies for retention. I actually spoke with him at NYSAC this weekend and had a really good conversation with him at retention and recruitment. If we're looking for strategies, I don't think we have to create them. I think they already exist and I just would like to remind people of that November 4th document. I think we can add some of those in here for future consideration.

DEZALIA: Yeah, in Syracuse and along with Saratoga County they had a lot of strategies. I think the paid parental leave is also a retention and recruitment. So, there's like creative ways that you can use different things for both.

WILSON: Thank you for sticking around, Ken. And I think again, this goes back to recommendation Number 4, the one I skipped about the handbook. A lot of this stuff is where we're going to address it in our small work group, then in the Personnel Committee, Personnel/Administration Committee with the County Manager, with the Head of Personnel. A lot of that stuff is going to get developed and fully codified in that work.

MASCARENAS: One thing and like I said, I don't want to belabor this and before our Chairman returned I was going to talk about something that was very near and dear to your heart. So, every night or at least some point during the week the Chairman's reminding me that we some sort of communication specialist in the County. Somebody to do that work and it looks like that's part of your recommendation. That maybe something that we can look certainly look at sooner rather than later or make it part of the 2024 budget submission. Currently we have 85 positions or so, as we learned today that are unfilled. We could look at creating that and not have an impact on our current budget, because those positions are budgeted, quite frankly. If it's something, you'd rather do sooner than later, we certainly can and I think we can integrate, maybe the two goals to meet the needs of the Recruitment/Retention Committee and the overall County voice that we're trying to get out there.

WILSON: And that's what this recommendation was meant to dovetail with Shaun's talk about public information and so it was meant to be an additional rationale for having the position and some additional duties to make it really a full time job.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, because that was my concern, at first.

WILSON: Yeah, so thank you. Any other thoughts?

STANLEY: I think recruitment is something that we're sitting around here brainstorming to see who we can get to walk through the door. Retention I think is an issue, trying to get the voice of our current employees to help, maybe create some of those things that we may think are great things and great points that maybe we think would help retain people, but maybe that's not what

the employees think are important. So, I think in trying to get a pulse on the voice from our current employees may help us in some of those retention issues.

WILSON: And Joe and I were talking about recruiting younger people, whether it's for college or for the workplace. They don't want to show up 9:00-5:00, 5 days a week and they want to be flexible and they want to tailor stuff and that's going to be hard for us to adapt, but we need, some of the things I was talking with Joe about were things that never would have occurred to me. I was getting them from younger, potential employees and college students and how are we going to adapt and it's going to come back to our policies, again.

STANLEY: It's hard to plow a road from your couch.

MONTY: That was going to be comment, we're as government employers, employing people providing government services, it's hard not to have people full-time.

WILSON: Yup

MONTY: Because needs are there every single day, regardless of what department we have. Very few departments you can go and work from home and provide needs to the constituents that are paying you salary and that's, to me, that's a really strong consideration with anything we do.

DEZALIA: I can say that the three counties that spoke on this, they all implemented flexible work schedules. Where not everybody was coming in 9:00-5:00 anymore.

MASCARENAS: We do have that.

DEZALIA: So, obviously you have to look at every department. We would have to look at maybe their model and how it was working for them, because they implemented it. They're in their first year of it.

MONTY: Are they unionized, too?

DEZALIA: Saratoga County, Monroe County and I think Livingston. I think it was three counties.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: We do have flex, but we don't have, so every department has the ability to do that and some of that reins on the department head. You do have offices that are statutory by nature and you have office that can be more flexible. So, like in IT, I have people that come in at 7:00 in the morning, right through 9:00 in the morning and I allow them to kind of set their schedule and it works. It actually is a better form of service, because now I've got coverage from 7:00 to 5:00. Places like DMV, are probably, I'm guessing are set by the State and say you're open from this time to this time.

MERRIHEW, CHELSEA: Yeah

MASCARENAS, MIKE: So, if you're a cashier or somebody working that counter you kind of got to be there from those times to those times. So, you're right. We need to look at what titles can we be more flexible with? How can we do that and still provide a high level of service, because I

think we would all agree that the State's work from home policy isn't working. We can't get a hold of anyone ever and so we want to provide that high level of service, but still provide that level of flexibility. That's the main thing and I think we can do it and I think we have an opportunity this year during the contract negotiations to work on those things.

MONTY: And playing devil's advocate, again and I don't mean to downplay anything. So, now we're at some departments can offer it, right and some can't. so, now are we going to see an influx of people go and say, hey, I want to go from here to here, because I want to flex my time. So, the only thing we're doing is moving the problem to someplace else. So, now you've got less people working here, because everybody wants to go work here.

WILSON: But, I think that can be a strength, too, if we start identifying pathways in and offering, like Jim has talked about this, you start here, there are steps that you can work up where you've got liaisons with training like the county or internal training. So, yeah that would be a way to get people in the door and they work their way up.

MONTY: Maybe, but also how do you explain to DPW, how do you explain that to the Sheriff's Department that these people and again, I'm playing devil's advocate here. I'm not disagreeing with anything we're putting here, but I just think, you know this is not going to be a one fit for everybody.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: It's all part of the discussion.

MONTY: There could be 20 different policies.

WILSON: There's going to be a lot of growing pains. At the job fair, I met someone that I would consider early career professional stage age, you know, probably around 30 years old and she said, I have 3 or 4 things that I do for an income stream, I'm totally in charge of my schedule, I can go anywhere, do anything I want, I am making enough money to be happy, but I'm exploring the idea of what it would be like to go to a job and you know, it's going to be to recruit people that bring real skills, but are coming at it from a point of view that I just never thought of before. You know, it's going to be growing pains for us and I'm sure for Saratoga, all the counties you listed, there's growing pains there and yeah, we're going to have to see what we're comfortable with trying.

So, I would ask for any comments that you think of afterwards, please send them my way. This is a great discussion and this is really helpful. I'll take what I got here. Look for other input. We'll follow-up about the handbook and maybe get Shaun in.

DEZALIA: The subcommittee for the policy manual.

WILSON: Have emails been going out about that? I haven't seen them.

MASCARENAS: Friday, our RFP is due on the policy manual. So, we did put that out and hopefully we'll get some vendor that responds to that and we can get to work on that.

DEZALIA: So, maybe we can meet in March.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: Yeah

WILSON: That would be great.

MASCARENAS, MIKE: So, crossing my fingers. We didn't have a vendor, as of yesterday that has responded, but that's not unlike a vendor to come in at the 11th hour and put in a proposal.

WILSON: Thanks everybody, thanks for being here this long.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS RETENTION AND RECRUITING TASK FORCE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:30 PM.

Respectively Submitted,

Dina L. Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board