

PERSONNEL - COMMITTEE
Monday, May 15, 2023 - 10:00 AM

Stephanie DeZalia, Chairperson
JoePete Wilson, Vice-Chairperson

Chairwoman DeZalia called this Personnel Meeting to order at 10:00 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland, Charlie Harrington, Roy Holzer, Steve McNally, Noel Merrihew, James Monty, Tom Scozzafava, Matt Stanley, Ike Tyler, Davina Winemiller, Margaret Wood and Mark Wright. Robin DeLoria, Derek Doty, Ken Hughes and Joe Pete Wilson were excused.

Department Heads present: Jim Dougan, Judy Garrison, Jennifer Mascarenas and Michael Mascarenas.

News media: Alana Penny – Sun News.

DEZALIA: Good morning. We'll get this Personnel meeting off to order. Go ahead Jen.

J. MASCARENAS: Good morning. I have my updated monthly report if there are any questions on that?

DEZALIA: Any questions for Jen? What are our openings at now?

J. MASCARENAS: Is the vacancy list attached to that? It's right around 80, we hover right there. We are either lose a couple and get a couple more it stays right there.

SCOZZAFAVA: I know we did a resolution previously to Court Clerk, you came down and did a desk audit on our court clerk so when then title changes do we have to wait for Albany on that or do we just do this ourselves?

J. MASCARENAS: Well, I created the title we have to wait for Albany to approve whether it is okay for it to be in the exempt class so the title is there for towns to use but –

SCOZZAFAVA: Okay and there won't be any recommendation for salary?

J. MASCARENAS: Not as far as towns, villages or schools no.

MASCARENAS: We create the titles Mr. Scozzafava and towns have the authority to set their own pay scales just like schools, villages any of those things.

SCOZZAFAVA: But it will show a clear difference between the positions of clerk and court clerk which is what the desk audit was on?

J. MASCARENAS: Yeah the typical work activities are different yes.

SCOZZAFAVA: Alright, thank you.

DEZALIA: But it will be of the competitive class until the State says.

J. MASCARENAS: Yes.

DEZALIA: Okay.

SCOZZAFAVA: Until the State agrees to this we don't have the position of court clerk?

J. MASCARENAS: Nope, we have the position of court clerk it's competitive it means they have to take a test until the State approves that it is exempt.

SCOZZAFAVA: So if you have a clerk in place right now doing your court work should the town boards change that title to court clerk?

J. MASCARENAS: Up to the town.

SCOZZAFAVA: How can it be up to the town?

MASCARENAS: No, I think you should absolutely put people in correct positions especially upon the recommendation of a desk audit you should absolutely be putting those individuals in.

SCOZZAFAVA: I agree so if it comes back competitive then that individual would have to take a test? It's a gap between the clerk and the court clerk I can see that.

J. MASCARENAS: Right.

SCOZZAFAVA: Different duties in both.

J. MASCARENAS: Yes but I believe it's in the law that the town justices are allowed to have an exempt clerk.

SCOZZAFAVA: They are yes, absolutely.

J. MASCARENAS: So I don't believe that the State is going to come back saying that that position has to be competitive. I believe they will approve the exempt class.

SCOZZAFAVA: Thank you.

GILLILLAND: On the open positions so roughly what percentage do you think are positions that are state mandated services?

J. MASCARENAS: Mostly our Social Services positions are state mandated.

MASCARENAS: I think Mr. Gilliland and I was thinking about this earlier today I would like see hopefully by maybe the next meeting not just the positions that we haven't been able to fill but an actual kind of study on what are our most hard to place jobs. What positions are we seeing come up over and over again when we go out for application are we get applications and how many are we getting and those types of things. I think that would give us a better handle on what our mandated positions are verses our non-mandated plus be able to say or better focus. I mean I know in DSS I struggled awful in terms of attracting case workers. They did have solidified

somewhat in terms of what this board did for them and they are not losing people at the rate they did before which is really good but yeah, I think we need to understand these jobs on the bigger scale and see what we're getting so I'll work with their office. I'm trying to provide a reporting mechanism for next month if that's okay with you guys?

GILLILLAND: The reason I'm asking this is because we need to go back to the state. We have these state mandated services so therefore we have state mandated positions we can't fill then it's time for maybe the state and we various strategies in which we try to fill them with compensation etc. it's time to tell the state they are going to have to, these are mandated positions they should be swinging in and helping us out increasing compensation for those positions to get more people to apply is my thought process.

DEZALIA: Thank you Shaun.

McNALLY: I'm not on this committee but we've had these vacancies for years now, a couple years and I think this is continue because the baby boomers is the reason, they are starting to retire and that's what is causing this. This is not just an issue in Essex County this is statewide, countrywide. You know at some point we're getting the job done now and there is some critical employees leaving but my recommendation is these people that have been here dedicated employees that do a great job picking up the slack you know, maybe we don't need to fill eight positions, maybe we can fill four positions in that department if that's the case let's fill it with four, take that money and give it back to the employees that are working so hard. Our county employees are not overpaid any position in the county I don't believe so – I'm serious so if we can run the department we don't need eight, we have four take that expense that we have budgeted and give it to the other employees. We should reward the employees that work hard for us every day.

MASCARENAS: I don't disagree with you even a little bit Steve but it is a little more complicated than that these departments are regulated by industry standards so what we don't know is the ins and outs of each department so I can tell you for instance in DSS, their industry standard is fifteen cases per kid now when they are down it's not unusual for them to have more cases than fifteen the problem becomes is what if something happens to that child and we've got that caseworker inundated with thirty cases now we've got a problem because the industry standard is fifteen same as in Probation there's industry standards, there's industry standards in Mental Health so I do agree with you not every industry has a standard right?

McNALLY: This can be case by case but there's other employees. This problem is not going away as the baby boomers continue to retire this is not going away. I'm very familiar with a larger company that I have dealings with that the company years ago ran into this problem with lack of employees what they did is they hired everybody through the door that worked for about six months and they found out they are better off without some of these employees so sometimes you know we get desperate we're not helping our case by hiring employees that aren't qualified or do not have a good work ethic but I know as a fact these people here that are working here now a majority of them are dedicated employees and they really can use extra money.

MASCARENAS: I don't disagree.

DEZALIA: I agree also Steve.

TYLER: When I tell people we are down 70, 80 positions at the county several of them have told

me well, it would be fewer if you lowered our taxes then I said well, it doesn't work quite that way but I would just like to say that you guys do a great job over in Personnel every time anybody that I know or myself contacts you guys over in the office over there we get 100% satisfaction out of you guys thank you very much. Good job.

J. MASCARENAS: Thank you.

WINEMILLER: Jen, last week Terri was explaining to us that there was a massive problem with hiring therapists and I know there was some discussion about maybe changing the way we can hire for those positions so that we could have remote workers in therapists positions do you feel that that would be a good idea and helpful in elevating the issues we're having?

J. MASCARENAS: Well I mean it's not really for me to decide but what I can say is that as civil service and part of the union you can't do it for one group of employees and not the whole so that would be something that management and the union would have to agree on.

MASCARENAS: One opportunity Davina and I eluded to it last week during that meeting is you can contract with organizations that provide this service that's not unusual there's a lot of organizations in neighboring counties that do provide therapy services through a contract and that we then don't dictate how they work so if we hire them directly, yes then we have an issue with you have work from home policies, remote work and all that. If we're simply contracting with another agency they're the employer and we make the decision on whether or not we want to continue through that service based on outcomes not necessarily deciding what they pay, what their policies are procedure and those things so there's a difference between whether or not we're hiring them or not. I think right now they maybe have two positions open in the Mental Health Department but I sent out a thing last week there's a couple members that did volunteer to meet with Mental Health and the Community Services board we're going to start the conversation there to see how we can maybe increase capacity of the resources that we have not only here but in our surrounding counties that maybe beneficial so that's where we are going to start that conversation but I think that's the tip of the iceberg in terms of mandated service like Mr. Gilliland was eluding to earlier.

WINEMILLER: Well, Terri, forgive me if I'm getting the numbers wrong but I thought she said she needed five or six more people?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I'm going to go through and look at that assessment. I can tell you initially if I look at that I'm not seeing a lot of overtime, comp. time being driven through that department so I really need to understand what she's talking about in terms of service that's falling down. I think really she's concerned that she's getting to that level where they are at the breaking point that they are not necessarily there yet but I think she sees it coming so we're not seeing it necessarily in terms of our actual numbers in terms of our employment but I think she sees it coming down the road.

WINEMILLER: Okay thank you.

DEZALIA: Anything further for Jen?

J. MASCARENAS: Stephanie I did just want to say that my office participated in the CV Tech job fair last Thursday and we had a really good turn out as far as high school seniors.

DEZALIA: Oh, good. Best place to start.

MASCARENAS: If I could, we do have some Earn while you Learn program, we had some people start this week. We've gotten around ten to twelve applications we're working on placing those students in areas that they feel they would be a best fit and hopefully that will continue to help us out in terms of recruiting individuals and keeping them long term.

DEZALIA: Good, thank you. Alright thank you Jen. Judy –

GARRISON: Good morning. I submitted a monthly report and I do not have anything in addition to that unless any has any questions for me?

DEZALIA: Anything for Judy? Okay, thank you Judy and I don't think Dan has anything so I'm assuming we're all set. Anything further to come before the Personnel committee? Alright, thank you we are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Personnel committee it was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors