

PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATION
Monday, March 18, 2024 - 10:00 AM

Kenneth Hughes, Chairperson
JoePete Wilson, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Hughes called this Personnel Meeting to order at 10:13 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Robin DeLoria, Derek Doty, Shaun Gilliland, Charlie Harrington, Ken Hughes, Steve McNally, James Monty, Cathleen Reusser, Favor Smith, Matt Stanley, Ike Tyler, Davina Thurston, Margaret Wood and Mark Wright. Joe Pete Wilson was excused.

Department Heads present: Judy Garrison, Dan Manning, Jennifer Mascarenas, Michael Mascarenas and Matt Watts.

Deputies present: Josh Favro

News media: None present.

HUGHES: Good morning everyone. It is 10:13 a.m. and I'd like to call this Personnel and Administration committee to order. We will start with Jen Mascarenas from the Personnel Office please.

J.MASCARENAS: Good morning. I have my monthly report and the updated vacancy list.

HUGHES: Any questions on that report for Jen?

MONTY: Jen, I see on your graphs here we're getting several applications and stuff and obviously we've got to go through the process and everything are the applications, the people that are applying reasons maybe for them not to be considered is it primarily qualifications being not at the education level, experience, background?

J.MASCARENAS: It can be all of those or any of those. It really depends on what the qualifications for the position are and whether or not they meet those. It could be education. It could be experience. It could be they don't have the proper license, it could be any of those.

MONTY: Is there a department you find more prevalent that these applications are not fitting into that scope?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I think with this report too doesn't say and would be helpful is where are those applications coming from by whom? Where are we receiving them from? So I can tell you just from what we did with that one job, we had 30 applicants so that was on one position. So when you look at that you realize that what we're getting applications from are typically those job classifications that don't have a lot of qualifications. When you start getting into jobs where you require an education and or a higher level of skills set we are still not getting them so it's a little misleading the report in terms I think if we knew and we'll work on that for next time I think it would be helpful. What are those applications and who are we getting them for and who are we not getting them for but I can tell you the higher level of skill that we're asking the less applications we are getting for those of positions. So my guess is a lot of these positions we are getting applications are those that don't require master's degrees, bachelor's degrees those types of

things but probably less.

J.MASCARENAS: I think if you look on page two it will tell you how many applications we got for each position.

MASCARENAS: Okay so that will speak to what I am talking about.

HUGHES: In Jen's defense, so I put this together.

MONTY: I was just asking, I was just curious.

HUGHES: In the past two months I only listed the job vacancies at the top because I wanted the board and the committee to understand how many current vacancies we had from year to year to see if there might be a seasonality to it or making an attempt at progress. I just added last evening the received applications because as Jen mentioned it was on the page 2 and I felt that that number may also have a correlation of some kind to the vacancies we have but it also may show a seasonality as you can see in November and December we are down so maybe we need to set our expectations a little lower at the holiday season when people may not be applying for jobs as often but I think Mike does bring up a good point that different kinds of jobs, if you have a lower level job you might get more applicants, a higher level job you might get less applicants so it's kind of apples and oranges.

MONTY: And some of our applicants are probably coming in for jobs that have no intention of seeking employment but they have to show that they are looking for work.

MASCARENAS: Well that's a good point. I can tell you one thing that was bizarre last week DSS was trying to hire an account clerk to replace somebody that retired, they had a handful of applications they felt pretty good about them. They called every one of them only one person responded so there's also a lot of people applying for position but then not responding to calls for interviews and those types of things which is a little unusual. I'm not sure where that is coming from necessarily, you had enough energy to fill out the application but not necessarily interested so I'm not sure.

MONTY: What I am seeing is that we have these positions and Jen and Personnel are doing everything they can to fill these positions yet, we are not getting the sincerity of applicants for lack of different wording but I think we are doing everything, my point is we are doing or personnel is doing everything they can to fill these positions again it goes back to do we have people that actually want to work?

REUSSER: Do we know how our phones come up when Essex County calls out somewhere because everybody has spam filters on their phone now.

HUGHES: It comes across as anonymous for me.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, it does.

J. MASCARENAS: Private I think.

THURSTON: Restricted.

REUSSER: I just would like to point that out.

MASCARENAS: Yeah it does. It comes up odd.

HUGHES: If there is any suggestions or recommendations on how to improve this graph report please let me know and I would be happy to consider it for future meetings.

REUSSER: Do they provide email?

J.MASCARENAS: Some provide email addresses and we do communicate with some through that but most of the information that we send is sent certified to them that they have to sign for or call, we do call. We do it however we can really.

REUSSER: I'm sure.

SMITH: My experience is texting. It's not a great solution but I get lots of texts with a certain age group.

HUGHES: Thank you.

McNALLY: So applicants apply for one position at a time is that the way we do it? Like if there is a position for a building maintenance helper that's what they apply for and if they are not hired do you recommend them to apply for additional positions that maybe comparable to that in the county or is there something that they can apply for multiple positions at one time? They may not know of the other position or you may have a better understanding of what they qualify for. So someone applies for a position as a custodian but you realize that they have a background in maintenance so do you say we don't have an opening here any longer but the maintenance department does. Do you forward the information out that way or do we make them do a complete new application?

J.MASCARENAS: No we tried to accommodate most vacant positions so we do have them apply for more than one position on the application and if they don't qualify often we will notify them and tell them that they qualify for this position.

McNALLY: Mike forwarded me the demographics and I think probably everybody here has seen it. This problem is not going away in 20 years so any little step we can make moving forward is very, very important. I think we've done, Ken and his group has done a great job but I think we have a lot more work ahead of us.

HUGHES: And coming in the springtime I think May the HELP program has been expanded at the State Level so we'll have some more information about that for you all. It was passed in February but it is being implemented in I think May or June so we'll have more details of that for you when it actually becomes a thing. Jen, anything else for the committee?

J. MASCARENAS: Yes, actually I am requesting a resolution to change the grade of the Emergency Services Call Taker-Dispatcher from a grade 9 to a grade 10 and the Senior Emergency Communications Dispatcher from a grade 11 to a grade 12.

HUGHES: You have this paperwork on your desks. It is what I just handed out. It's the single sheet of paper.

MASCARENAS: This is something I've been working on, Jen's been working on, Ken has been brought in more recently as his role changed with Emergency Services probably since last summer. I am absolutely think this is warranted. It makes a lot of sense. There's really no room for advancement in that department. If you are hired a call taker dispatcher you might remain in that position in perpetuity so you start, we train you, there's a tremendous amount of training to do that job but then you never move up so what we're trying to do is create gaps in between some of these titles and positions that are logically next steps for employees that they are not dead ended in jobs because you take a department like that there's very few senior opportunities that these people are going to move into you might be a call taker dispatcher for your whole career and you're getting paid at the same rate as somebody that got hired yesterday that is just getting that training that you know and now do. So it's really in the same thought process that this board did with the highway department last year where we created some of those gap titles and gave employees room to grow and gave them things to shoot for as employees that's really what this does so it doesn't really upset the apple cart per say it allows people to move to a next level or at least creates opportunity for them to control their career.

HUGHES: Can you just clarify any budget impact?

MASCARENAS: I don't know that exact amount right now. I can tell you for the employees it will be pretty minimal so you're looking right there would be \$2800 a person so that's about \$16,000-\$17,000 a year our vacants more than cover for that.

HUGHES: That's the point I wanted to make the vacancies are covering for any kind of increase that we have exist.

DOTY: Are the grade levels like a consistent percentage? Is that 3%?

J.MASCARENAS: The grade levels are based on our unit contract. I'm not sure what the percentage is.

MASCARENAS: The answer is no. The answer is the pay scale got set up a long time ago. There's no rhyme or reason you'll see big jumps between certain grades and not so big jumps between other grades and a lot of that is because we have been percentage based for so long. We did change to a flat rate in the most recent union contract which kind of keeps it uniformed so when you're going 3%-4% on an annual basis in a contract those lower grades aren't getting the same amount that a grade 15 is so what you see is that gap grow which is why you have over time some inconsistencies in that pay scale so no, there is no logical increase between a grade. It's really about what are the qualifications and what are the expectations? At some point in time there was when that was created but over time it goes away.

HUGHES: Can I have a motion on this resolution please?

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CHANGE TO THE EMERGENCY SERVICES CALL TAKER-DISPATCHER POSITION FROM A GRADE 9 TO A GRADE 10 AND THE SENIOR EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS DISPATCHER POSITION FROM A GRADE 11 TO A GRADE 12. Smith, Barber

HUGHES: Further discussion?

THURSTON: I just had a question, is there a step pay for these folks?

MASCARENAS: No. The jail contract has steps one through seven. The local unit has no steps but they do have the three and five year increase which you could consider a step but that's how you get back to the pre 2009 rate so every contract has different rules but the most you're ever going to get is that three and five year rate in the local unit they are a little more closely combined.

HUGHES: Any further questions? All in favor of the resolution signify by saying aye, opposed – carried. Thank you. Anything else Jen?

J.MASCARENAS: Actually yes, I just wanted to mention that we have three job fairs that are coming up. We have SUNY Plattsburgh on March 28th, we have Ti High School students on April 25th and then we have the Westside Ballroom job fair on May 1st so we are still working on getting out there.

HUGHES: How many other departments will be involved with that other than our Personnel Department?

J.MASCARENAS: I am not positive. I know social services usually they always go I'm not sure about DPW or any of them.

HUGHES: It would be interesting to know I don't know who can tell us but who actually attends those.

McNALLY: At the Ti one will we be promoting our boot camp program?

MASCARENAS: Mr. Hughes put a bunch of names, we are staying away from boot camp.

HUGHES: I've created five names to try and create a brand for it. I'm working on it.

McNALLY: Choose one. Are we going to try and promote that program?

MASCARENAS: Yes sir.

HUGHES: Absolutely.

MASCARENAS: Just so the board knows I do send this stuff to Mr. Hughes because he's the Chair of the Personnel but we are starting to get some interest in that. I sent him an email we got from a young lady last week that was a college student that is interested in both DSS and Mental Health opportunities that wants to work so it is working on some level. It's not at the level we want it to but every little thing helps and again, the demographics speak to that so we're going to keep trying but we're also going to have to understand that we are going to have to change the way we do business on some things.

McNALLY: Now is the prime time before people start getting their summer employment lined up.

HUGHES: I organized all the mailing addresses and email addresses of every single guidance counselor for every single school in our county and I want to create a little poster that has not boot camp on it but has the name of it on there, no disrespect.

McNALLY: Remember, we are not just after high school kids.

HUGHES: No, no, no 100% but at least we are going to start there as well. We are including them as well. You're not wrong.

MASCARENAS: And Mr. Hughes and I have been working on who do we have to reach out to? What platforms do we use? I was telling him the other day what we use, he was shooting back at me maybe some things we are not thinking of so we are working on it.

HUGHES: Okay any other questions for Jen? Jen, awesome report. Thanks so much. We are going to move on to Judy.

GARRISON: Good morning. I submitted my monthly report showing our OTB and printing revenue. I also have a resolution this month, appointing Charles "Kip" Thompson to the Board of Trustees of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System for a five year term beginning January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2028.

RESOLUTION APPOINTING CHARLES "KIP" THOMPSON TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CLINTON-ESSEX-FRANKLIN LIBRARY SYSTEM FOR A FIVE YEAR TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024 – DECEMBER 31, 2028. Brassard, Smith

HUGHES: Discussion? All in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – carried. Thank you. Anything else Judy?

GARRISON: That's all I have this morning.

HUGHES: Any questions for Ms. Judy Garrison? Okay, thanks Judy. Moving onto Mr. Manning.

MANNING: Good morning. I would like to ask for a brief executive session relative to legal fees involving the lawsuit of Stephen Blanchard v. Essex County which is vented in the United States District Court New York and is in line with Hennepin avalanche that's coming our way.

HUGHES: Can I get a motion by Mr. Barber, second by Mr. Wright. All in favor. See you in there.

THE COMMITTEE MOVED INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 10:30 A.M. TO DISCUSS LEGAL FEES INVOLVING THE LAWSUIT OF STEPHEN BLANCHARD V. ESSEX COUNTY AND MOVED BACK INTO OPEN SESSION AT 10:42 A.M.

HUGHES: Okay I'd like to note the time is 10:42 and we are back in regular session, no decisions or determinations were made in executive session. I will now return it back to the County Attorney, Dan Manning.

MANNING: One last thing I would just like to ask for a brief resolution, resolution authorizing the county manager or County Chairman to enter into a retainer agreement with April Laws Esq. of Johnson Laws LLC to represent Essex County in the matter of Stephen Blanchard v. Essex County. You have this before you. I would like a motion and a second.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A RETAINER AGREEMENT WITH APRIL LAWS, ESQ. OF JOHNSON LAWS LLC TO REPRESENT ESSEX COUNTY IN THE MATTER OF STEPHEN BLANCHARD V. ESSEX COUNTY MATTER (HENNEPIN) Reusser, Smith

HUGHES: Discussion? No discussion, all in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – carried. Thank you very much. Anything else?

MANNING: No unless anyone has any questions for me?

HUGHES: Any questions for Mr. Manning? Moving on it looks like recruitment and retention at the bottom here. We have ongoing efforts for recruitment and retention and I realize there was a committee that actually put together a list of recommendations and a report and I don't believe that we actually recon set on a monthly basis so I'm going to make sure that the committee and the board has a copy of that so that we can kind of take a peek at that at each personnel meeting and making sure we are meeting the goals of that report and it is not just sitting collecting dust on a shelf somewhere so I just wanted to put that out there.

I would also like to offer myself personally and I hope your support a resolution of appreciation and gratitude to Rob Wick for not only his work in the Essex County Planning Department to further the goals and objectives of Essex County and our organization but also in appreciation for what he has done for each of our eighteen towns over the years so I will make that motion. Can I have a unanimous second? Thank you very much.

**RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE TO ROB WICK FOR ALL HIS WORK IN THE ESSEX COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND TOWNS IN ESSEX COUNTY.
Hughes, unanimous**

HUGHES: And also it was mentioned last month that on May 30th there will be a career expo to be held at the Essex County Fairgrounds complex. I have no new information about that but I will keep you in the loop as I learn more. Is there anything else to come before this Personnel Administration committee meeting? If not, we stand adjourned. Thank you.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Personnel meeting it was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors