

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
Held via Audio Webinar Pursuant to Temporary Emergency Orders

Members: Chairman Nacerino and Legislators Jonke & Montgomery

Tuesday

July 14, 2020

The meeting was called to order via audio webinar at 6:00pm by Chairwoman Nacerino who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Committee Members Jonke, Montgomery and Chairwoman Nacerino were present.

Item #3 – Approval/ Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes – June 18, 2020

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/ Approval/ Proposed Personnel Changes in the Health Department/ Fiscal Manager William Orr

Chairwoman Nacerino confirmed that Commissioner of the Health Department Dr. Michael Nesheiwat, Fiscal Manager of the Health Department Bill Orr and Personnel Director Paul Eldridge were all present on the Audio Webinar. She stated she would start by asking Commissioner Nesheiwat to begin with an introduction to this matter.

Commissioner Nesheiwat stated he appreciates the opportunity to present these proposed personnel changes for the Department of Health. He stated last year a very lean budget was presented for the Health Department. He stated as a lifelong resident of Putnam County he truly understands the importance of maintaining a very financially sound budget, while still maintaining a continuity of care. He stated he understands the challenges this pandemic has on the Nation, the State and the Counties on many levels. He stated next Fiscal Manager Bill Orr will speak to the proposed personnel changes, that they believe are in the best interest of the County and the people the Health Department serves.

Fiscal Manager Orr stated there may be a question on the minds of the Legislators as to why Personnel Changes are being proposed now rather than waiting for the 2021 Budget Process. He stated that he believes it will become apparent as he goes through the proposed changes. He stated in the Administrative Fiscal Division a Principal Typist Grade 12 retired in March of 2020. He stated as a result of that retirement the County lost a 35 hour per week employee and her 15 years of institutional knowledge. He stated normally the hiring process would have begun to fill the position, but due to the COVID-19 and its impediment of the vacancy control and the hiring process. He stated additionally, the Principal Typist accruals were paid out as of June 9, 2020. He stated now they are able to move forward to fill this position. He stated the proposal is to fill the vacancy with a Grade 5 Typist/ Office Assistant. He stated currently there is a part-time 25/hour person hired off of the Grade 5 List, who has been in the department for three (3) years. He stated the proposal is to fill the vacancy with the part-time employee, who will then be a full-time Typist/Office Assistant - Grade 5. He stated the proposal is to

reduce the Part Time 25-hour position said employee would be vacating to a 14-hour Part Time position. He stated this will ensure a substantial savings. He stated it is a vital position the Fiscal Department cannot do without. He stated the COVID-19 has also affected the timing of the requested Personnel changes in the Early Intervention/ Pre-K Department (EI/Pre-K). He stated they propose to hire to fill the Senior Clerk position with an employee who previously worked full time in the Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) Department, a department the County no longer has, as of mid-2019. He stated this individual has been working on a temporary line working with EI and in a COVID-19 position. He stated this proposed change will result in all four (4) of the WIC fulltime employees filling fulltime status positions in the Health Department. He stated next the proposal to reclassify the EI Coordinators from Grade 14 to Grade 15 has merit and will be addressed by Personnel Director Eldridge after he is done. He stated the reclassification of the Principal Account Clerk to an Associate Account Clerk also has merit because the employee has been working out of title. He stated this employee has been administering the day to day activities of the Pre-K Program and has been working in the Department for 17 years. He stated the EI and Pre-K Programs have grown substantially and so have this employees' responsibilities. He stated the current responsibilities of said employee are more consistent with an Associate Account Clerk position, which is the proposed request. He stated it is agreed by him and Commissioner Nesheiwat that this proposed changes for these two (2) Divisions are what is right for the division, the Health Department, the County and the Taxpayers. He stated these requests would have been requested much sooner in the year, but due to COVID-19 they were not. He stated additionally retirements are happening now and will continue. He stated they are crucial positions that will need to be replaced to enable the Health Department to continue to provide the quality service the Commissioner and employees of the Health Department strive to achieve. He continued to elaborate on the financial impacts of the proposed changes. He stated the projected net savings as a result of the proposed changes for 2020 would be \$28,921 and for 2021 would be \$40,983. He stated if the proposed changes are approved the 2021 savings would continue to be an annual savings, with minimal drawdown with the CSEA contract. He stated in summary the proposal set forth: there was a retirement, they are requesting to underfill that position, reducing temp hours from 25 hours to 14 hours. He stated he would next review the proposed staffing changes in the Early Intervention Department (EI). He stated they are proposing to eliminate the Director of EI & Pre-K position. He stated the costs saving from removing the position will allow changes to be made throughout the department that have been discussed and requested in the past, while focusing on future needs. He stated the proposal is to add a new position of a Senior Clerk. He explained the clerical duties have increased tremendously in the EI/ Pre-K Program. He stated the clerical duties fell upon the current four (4) Service Coordinators. He stated the Senior Clerk will support the Service Coordinators. He stated this will allow the Service Coordinators to spend more billable activities with the families. He stated in 2020 they were approved a part-time Senior Clerk position and the EI Service Coordinator Revenues increased. He stated with a full time Senior Clerk position he estimates the revenue source to increase to \$100,000. He stated the last WIC person will be hired into the proposed Senior Clerk position. He stated the increase in revenue will help offset the salary.

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated the four (4) EI Service Coordinators are all highly trained, between them they have Phd, master's degrees and are extremely dedicated to the children that come through the program. He stated the EI Service Coordinators contacted him stating their CSEA Grade level did not match up with other titles throughout the County structure, most specifically the position of Case Worker in Social Services and Office for Senior Resources. He stated an evaluation was done. He stated the qualifications are almost identical. He stated there is a slightly higher requirement for the EI Service Coordinator position. He stated this is the opportunity to adjust that. He stated this proposed reorganization does many things: increases efficiency, increases billable hours, provides the clerical support needed to continue to increase the billable hours, provided additional supervision at the EI Service Coordinator level, with the recommendation to move one of the four to a Senior level, that will fill the gap of the elimination of the current, vacant, Director of EI & Pre- K responsibilities. He explained that there have been many discussions and meetings about the proposals. He stated the reason why now and not through the 2021 Budget process, is because the golden opportunity exists right now to gather savings not only in 2021 and moving forward, but the savings would be created immediately in 2020. He stated also the matter will be taken care of with the Grade level difference between the EI Coordinators and the Caseworkers, and the last remaining WIC employee would be placed in a full-time position, as promised. He stated when the WIC Department was eliminated it was promised that everything would be done in their power to make sure all the employees would be appropriately taken care of. He stated on many different levels he sees this as a terrific plan. He stated the County Executive, Commissioner of Health and he are all in support of this proposal. He stated this proposal will increase efficiency, which is always important, but particularly critical given the current times.

Chairwoman Nacerino expressed her appreciation for the presentation put forth. She stated the timing and rationale behind this proposal was questionable, considering the Health Department Reorganization that took place, not too long ago. She stated after hearing all the information shared this evening, it is very clear to her that this is the right thing to do and it is the right time. She stated she is very happy to hear that this would result in the WIC employee being placed in a permanent position after a long time of waiting. She stated she sees this as a win-win situation. She stated that she has always maintained that within reason, the Department Heads really do know what is best for the operations of their department. She stated she is supportive of this proposal.

Legislator Montgomery thanked the representatives from the Health Department and the Personnel Department. She stated it is a very complicated structure. She too is thankful that the WIC Employee would be placed in a fulltime position. She questioned if the Supervisors were consulted about these changes, did the recommendations come from them or was this something looked at primarily for efficiencies.

Commissioner Nesheiwat stated to begin with, this proposal is about doing the right thing at the right time for the right people. He stated there were multiple meetings involving the EI Coordinators, with Managers and there was input, and compliments received from the workers in the Health Department. He stated these were not "top

heavy” decisions made, they came from everyone involved. He stated they believe this is the best course of action for this Department in these difficult and challenging times. He stated in summary the answer is yes they did receive input from everyone.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the Union Heads were aware of these proposals.

Director Eldridge stated he did discuss with the Union representatives about the Grade levels of the EI Service Coordinator and Case Worker changes. He stated it has been on the radar screen for the Union. He stated he has had many conversations with the Union regarding the WIC employee. He stated that he has spoken to the WIC employee directly. He stated the WIC employee has been extremely effective and working very well, he is very pleased to meet the County’s promise to take care of the WIC employees. He stated the Union is supportive of the proposed changes.

Legislator Montgomery reviewed the summary of changes that were reported, and requested that she be corrected in the event she did not get it correctly.

Personnel Director Eldridge provided some clarification on Legislator Montgomery’s recap of the proposed Personnel changes presented.

Legislator Montgomery stated that in these proposed Personnel changes she sees a lot of responsibility being placed on employees and not a lot of compensation. She stated she has seen that in the Health Department. She stated she wants to ensure the sustainability of these positions and of the Health Department and not burn people out. She stated it seems those doing the hands-on work are now also taking on the clerical work too. She stated that she believes that is a lot. She stated she understands the need to find efficiencies is a goal.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated he wanted to point out that the individual who will go from a Grade 14 to a Grade17 Senior EI Coordinator position, if the proposed package is adopted, it is not an insignificant amount of money that the employee will receive.

Fiscal Manager Orr stated the increase for the position in 2021 will be \$6,826, the individual will be fully compensated.

Legislator Montgomery requested if this proposal will be addressed during the July Health Committee meeting also.

Chairwoman Nacerino stated it will not. She stated the proposal involves Personnel changes, she does not believe it is appropriate for it to go to the Health Committee.

Legislator Montgomery stated it was a question based on the fact that it will affect the Health Department and it affects the services provided.

Chairwoman Nacerino stated she believes every member of the Health Committee is in attendance this evening. She stated if they have questions, they can present them.

Legislator Jonke stated he too would like to thank Commissioner Nesheiwat, Fiscal Manager Orr and Personnel Director Eldridge for presenting the proposal. He stated in the end he sees this as a total cost savings to the taxpayers of Putnam County. He stated the proposal will result in lowering cost and giving some employees much needed and fair increases to create some parity. He stated he thinks he may be the only Legislator who has had interaction on a personal level with the County's Early Intervention employees. He stated these are wonderfully skilled people. He stated for most families the EI Department and employees are the first contact for a family, after a child has been diagnosed with a developmental disability. He stated they do an incredibly good job. He stated this is a small price to pay to create fairness and parity. He stated he is in favor of the proposal to hire an Administrative piece of this puzzle to free up the time of the Coordinator, which to some extent is reimbursed to the County. He stated in the end this is a win-win. He expressed his thanks again to the gentlemen for making the presentation at this time.

Chairwoman Nacerino thanked Legislator Jonke for his comments and stated she agrees with everything he stated.

Legislator Albano stated he is in favor of the proposal and thankful to all on the call.

Legislator Sayegh stated she believes the proposal was well presented. She stated that she can see a lot of work went into this. She thanked Health Commissioner Nesheiwat, Personnel Director Eldridge and Health Fiscal Manager Orr for always working to improve efficiencies and saving the taxpayer dollars. She stated in our current environment all business and operation, whether it be government or business must find ways to tighten the financial belt while achieving efficiencies. She stated she also wanted to thank all the County's Health Department employees for all of their hard work during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated they have done a stellar job and have gone above and beyond for the people of Putnam County.

Legislator Gouldman expressed his appreciation for a very nice presentation by the gentlemen. He stated he believes it to be a great plan and thanked them for bringing it forward. He stated it is a very complicated situation during these trying times. He stated creating immediate savings is very good and smart thing to do. He stated the placement of the WIC employee is a positive he is glad to see.

Legislator Sullivan stated this is a great example of what Department Heads can do when they put their minds together. He stated he believes these to be great solutions to fill retirement positions while making the operations of the department more cost effective and efficient. He stated he believes this is a good example for the other Department Heads of the County, as more retirements occur. He stated he applauds Commissioner Nesheiwat, Fiscal Manager Orr and everyone in the Health Department for coming up with such a great plan to move forward with.

Chairwoman Nacerino stated well said and she concurs with all that Legislator Sullivan said.

Chairwoman Nacerino made a motion to Approve Proposed Personnel Changes in the Health Department; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Roll Call:

Legislator Jonke- Aye

Legislator Montgomery- Aye with a statement, that she would like representatives from the program, being affected, in attendance at the Legislative meeting.

Chairwoman Nacerino- Aye

Motion Carries.

Item #5 - FYI/ Overtime/ Temporary Report/ Finance Commissioner William Carlin (also copied to Audit Mtg)

Chairwoman Nacerino stated there are not many differences from last month's report. She provided a quick overview of the report.

Item #6 - FYI/ 2020 Accident Report – Duly Noted

Item #7 - FYI/ 2020 Employee Incident Report – Duly Noted

Item #8 - Other Business - None

Item #9 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 6:50 PM Chairman Nacerino made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsky.