



# Employees Advisory Council



*to continually improve the Pinellas County classified employees' quality of work life*

APPROVED BY THE EAC

Employees Advisory Council (EAC) Representatives Meeting – Minutes  
County Office Annex, Room 429, Clearwater, Florida  
December 19, 2012

## Call to Order

- ▶ Chairman Charles Toney called the meeting to order at 2:36 P.M.

## Introductions

- ▶ The representatives in attendance introduced themselves. Outgoing and incoming representatives were recognized.

## Approval of Minutes

- ▶ The minutes of the October, and November 2012 EAC Representatives and the September and November 2012 Delegates meeting were approved unanimously.

## Comments from Peggy Rowe, Human Resources (HR) Director

Ms. Rowe extended holiday wishes to everyone.

- ▶ Ms. Rowe and David Blasewitz, Benefits Manager, provided an update on the United Health Care(UHC)/BayCare dispute, noting the attendance of UHC representatives at the November 2012 EAC Delegates Meeting, and indicated that negotiations between the parties resumed yesterday; that approximately 15 meetings regarding the dispute and impacts have been held, including the November EAC Delegates meeting, and all have gone well; that HR and the County are working out the details with UHC regarding the extra costs to employees; and that several employees have either postponed or gone to walk-in clinics for non-emergent care, noting that for every \$1.00 an employee spends on out-of-network costs, the County spends \$4.00; and that employees not using out-of-network benefits saves money and can be helpful in the ongoing negotiations.
- ▶ Ms. Rowe related that as a result of the dispute, the County initiated and held a press conference with several other municipal officers in attendance to stress the impacts of the dispute on the employees and to urge UHC and BayCare to resolve the dispute quickly.
- ▶ Ms. Rowe noted that the County has agreed to pay 50 percent of the additional BayCare out-of-network costs through the end of the 2012 calendar year.
- ▶ Ms. Rowe related that UHC is helping BayCare doctors obtain admitting rights at non-BayCare hospitals, noting that there are 300 BayCare doctors and 12,000 non-BayCare doctors available to employees.
- ▶ Ms. Rowe noted that the next update is anticipated to be sent to employees by Friday, December 21, 2012; and assured everyone that the County is researching all possibilities

relating to the UHC/BayCare health benefits situation, pointing out that the County has a contract with UHC, which must be taken into consideration.

- ▶ Mr. Blasewitz noted that the employees' responses to the issue have been good; and that several employees have offered positive comments and suggestions.
- ▶ Keith Dekle, EAC-appointee to the Unified Personnel Board, complimented HR on getting the 8 UHC representatives to attend, thanked the UHC representatives for attending, the November EAC Delegates meeting, commented on the UPB Chairman's attendance at the press conference held by the County on Friday, November 7, 2012, and stated that, with the EAC's approval, he will make a motion at the January UPB meeting to get BayCare and UHC together, and no objections were noted.
- ▶ In response to query, Ms. Rowe and Mr. Blasewitz indicated that the buyout of the Diagnostic Clinic by Blue will have no immediate impact on an employee's ability to use the Diagnostic Clinic; and that any potential long-term impacts are unknown at this time.

#### Unified Personnel Board (UPB)

- ▶ Next meeting will be held Thursday, January 10, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. in the County Commission Assembly Room, 315 Court Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor; all new representatives are encouraged to attend a few meetings, especially when there is a grievance or appeal hearing.
- ▶ George Tragos, one of the EAC-appointed UPB members, had to resign from the UPB. The EAC is looking at the resumes of two candidates to choose a replacement for Mr. Tragos. If anyone has any names of any potential candidates, please forward them to your EAC representative.
  - ▶ Dr. Doug Duncan, Senior Vice-President, St. Petersburg College has a career background in Human Resources and supports employees' ability to have time to serve on the EAC.
  - ▶ Ryan Barack, Esquire has represented (or someone from his firm has represented) County employees before the UPB previously and has requested information from HR to determine whether a conflict of interest would exist if he served on the UPB.
  - ▶ Interviews will be set up for the January EAC Representatives meeting.

#### Committee Reports

- ▶ Mr. Toney provided an update on the Legislative Delegation Florida Retirement System (FRS) lawsuit, indicating that there is nothing new to report at this time; and encouraged employees to contact the local Legislative Delegation members to express their views, as these are the people that go to Tallahassee to vote on issues affecting County employees.
  - ▶ Mr. Toney noted that the local Legislative Delegation usually holds two meetings per year (one in December and one in January); that he was unable to attend the December meeting, but hopes to attend the January meeting and will provide the EAC Representatives the meeting information once it has been received; and encouraged County employees to attend the meetings to request that the FRS benefits not be further diminished.
  - ▶ Mike Powell indicated that he heard from an attorney who heard the hearing tapes that the outcome does not look good for the employees; and that the position has been taken that Florida is a work at-will state and there is no contract for employment.
- ▶ Hazel Lane provided an update on the ongoing review of the Personnel Rules, indicating that she is on the discipline sub-committee that is reviewing the discipline rules; that the sub-

committee has turned over its suggestions to the main Committee; that the sub-committee discussed a discipline table; and that the next sub-committee meeting will be held on January 13, 2013. The Funeral Leave rules are also being reviewed at this time.

- ▶ Clare McGrane provided an update on the recent EAC Representative elections, indicating that the process went smoothly; and that the ballots were counted in a controlled environment; and Mr. Toney provided an overview of the elections process, and recognized Peggy Sellards, HR, for her often unseen efforts in assisting the EAC with the elections process.
- ▶ Mr. Toney provided an update on the Employee Advocate program, (and indicated that EAC Vice-Chair Lisa Wombles is having issues being able to attend the EAC meetings due to staffing issues within her department, which is being discussed with HR); that currently there are only five Employee Advocates, one of which is temporarily inactive, leaving four advocates to handle all of the cases; and that there is a desperate need for more advocates.
  - Discussion was held regarding the previous idea to advertise the Advocate Program on the web to try to recruit volunteers and possibly law students from outside the County. The Advocate Committee will need to meet to discuss the requirements for recruitments from outside the County.
  - Mr. Toney plans to attend an upcoming REPCO meeting to see if any retired County employees would be interested in serving as employee advocates.
  - Jean Magee, HR, requested that representatives ensure that individuals interested in serving as an advocate are in it for the right reason.
  - Jim Valliere, HR, pointed out that the Advocate Program is an EAC function; and that Human Resources (Employee Relations) assists employees with obtaining an advocate, reiterating that more advocates are desperately needed.
    - He will verify whether Ira Wolf can still serve as the Advocate Program Vice-Chair since Mr. Wolf will no longer be an EAC Representative, but will remain a Delegate. (After the meeting, discussion with Lisa Wombles indicated that advocates and members of the Advocate Committee are not required to be EAC Representative or Delegates.)
  - Mr. Dekle provided input regarding the training provided to employee advocates, noting that the County Attorney's Office speaks at the training. He related that about 8 to 12 advocates would be a good amount; and in response to queries by Steve Yeatman, indicated that advocates have the right to deny representation of an employee, which is why employees are given the name of three advocates.

#### Old Business

- ▶ EAC Website information updates
  - Discussion was held regarding the need to update the EAC's goals, annual report, and brochure, as well as possibly adding the EAC's new initiatives, such as reviewing the Personnel Rules, to the website.

#### New Business

- ▶ Election of EAC Officers for 2013 – Nominations/Votes
  - Mr. Toney noted that the representative position previously held by Sam Rastom, Clerk North, has been vacated by Mr. Rastom; that per the EAC bylaws, there was no runner-up to appoint and the Council has the authority to appoint someone by a two-thirds vote to fill

- the vacant position; and that because there is one year remaining on the term, the newly appointed representative will have voting rights.
- ▶ Ira Wolf moved, seconded by Tim Clark and unanimously carried, that current Clerk North EAC Delegate Tammy L. Burgess be appointed to fill the spot vacated by Mr. Rastom.
  - ▶ Chairman Charles Toney and Vice-Chairman Lisa Wombles were re-elected to serve in their current capacity as EAC officers for 2013; and Tammy L. Burgess was elected Secretary for 2013.
  - ▶ Noting that Ira Wolf will no longer be able to serve as the EAC's At-Large Representative, Mr. Toney opened the floor for nominations, wherein Mercedes Pearson volunteered to fill the position, which was unanimously approved by the Council.
  - ▶ Mr. Toney recognized Communications Department liaison Irena Milasinovic. Ms. Milasinovic offered her business cards to the Representatives and indicated that Communications will be taping 60-second clips of "fun" jobs within the County; whereupon, following brief discussion, nominations were made that the first 60-second clip be done on Ira Wolf.
  - ▶ Mr. Toney referenced the list of upcoming/potential/past guest speakers at the Delegates meetings and noted that Jim Valliere, will give the third of three presentations that were given to the Personnel Board earlier this year, at the January 24, 2013 EAC Delegate meeting.
  - ▶ Mr. Toney opened the floor for suggestions for potential new goals for the EAC:
    - ▶ EAC needs more exposure; too many employees do not know about the EAC's existence or what it does.
    - ▶ Annual survey to employees of how their respective departments are performing; should be department-specific, not by appointing authority.
    - ▶ Continue to seek raises for the employees.
  - ▶ Messrs. Toney and Dekle provided input regarding the Representatives' responsibilities, including ensuring that there are delegates for each of their respective areas, keeping the delegates informed, and ensuring information is disseminated to the delegates and the employees in the respective departments represented.
  - ▶ Mr. Clark advised the incoming EAC Representatives that, each month, the Representatives donate \$1.00 each to help defer the cost for the refreshments at the Delegate meetings.

#### Adjournment

- ▶ As a final act as an EAC Representative, Mr. Wolf motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:12 P.M.