



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Human Resources/Labor Relations
Committee*

*July 24, 2007
9:30 a.m.*

MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members

Anthony Griffin, Chair
Howard Gibbs (Phone)
Alexis H. Roberson
Keith Stone

WASA Staff

Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager
Barbara A. Grier, Assistant General Manager
Avis M. Russell General Counsel
Katrina Wiggins, Human Resources Director
Otho Milbourne, Benefits Manager
Rod Dones, Staffing Manager
Steve Cook, Labor Relations Manager
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

Anthony Griffin, Chairman, called the Human Resources/Labor Relations Committee (the Committee) to order at approximately 9:35 AM. Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager, provided background information on previous discussions and questions raised by the Committee regarding new employee incentives to improve recruitment and retention.

Katrina Wiggins, Director of Human Resources, provided an overview of current recruitment incentives and introduced proposed incentives which included the following:

- Signing Bonus
- Housing Assistance
- Home Equity Loans
- Dependent Care Subsidy
- Spot Awards
- Employee Referral Bonus

The parameters include, signing bonus up to 10% of base pay, not-to-exceed \$20,000; housing assistance to use for a down payment, closing costs, or monthly subsidy, not-to-exceed \$25,000; match employee dependent care contributions, not-to-exceed 50%

of the maximum amount allowable; and two items that do not require Board action, referral bonuses up to \$2,000 and \$25 spot award gift cards. All incentive payments will be paid incrementally. Mr. Johnson advised that the dependent care benefit would be available to non-union employees and would have to be negotiated for union employees.

Committee members raised questions about the Home Equity proposal, which allows WASA to have equity in the property of an employee. Mr. Griffin and Ms. Roberson questioned when and how the loan would be repaid. Mr. Gibbs questioned whether the proposal was in compliance with current lending laws in the District of Columbia. Mr. Johnson emphasized that this is a model based on similar programs in California. He advised the Committee that the loan options will be outlined and reviewed by General Counsel.

Keith Stone asked if the Authority had the budget to fund the signing bonuses. The General Manager stated that the Authority has available funds for this benefit. Mr. Griffin asked if other state or federal governments had similar incentive programs and suggested that a chart be developed to show the different programs by jurisdiction.

The Committee approved the proposed incentives programs in concept and requested clarification, specifically on Home Equity Loans. The General Manager recommended convening a conference call with Committee members in August to answer questions about the proposals prior to forwarding to the Board in September. Mr. Griffin agreed to schedule the conference call.

Otho Milbourne, Benefits Manager, presented a proposal for Annual Leave Conversion Options. The proposal would allow post-1987 employees to convert excess annual leave to sick leave which could enhance the Retiree Health Program approved in January 2007 for non-union employees. This would provide employees who accumulate the maximum amount of leave on a yearly basis another option other than losing leave at the end of the fiscal year. Another option for non-union employees would be the ability to donate excess annual leave to a sick leave bank. Mr. Griffin asked why employees do not use their annual leave and he expressed concern regarding employees who do not take time off. Barbara Grier, Assistant General Manager, said that long-term employees are taking leave but not as fast as it is being accrued, which results in an excess of leave. Ms. Roberson asked if non-union civil service employees could participate in the program. Mr. Johnson emphasized that civil service employees already have better benefits than post-1987 employees. After some discussion, the Committee supported the proposal and recommended moving the recommendation to the Board for approval.

Rod Dones, Staffing Manager, briefed the Committee on the current status of vacancies. He explained that the Authority has approximately 100 budgeted vacancies and that his staff is actively recruiting for 50. Mr. Griffin asked for clarification on the recruitment of only 50 of the authorized vacancies. Ms. Wiggins explained that the remaining 50 authorized positions were not requisitioned for various reasons including delaying recruitment of subordinate positions until the manager or supervisor position is filled; and allowing a new director time to evaluate staffing needs of the office. Mr. Griffin suggested a language change from “authorized vacancies” to “requisitioned vacancies”.

Mr. Dones concluded his presentation by discussing hard-to-fill positions and strategies for recruitment efforts and developing candidates through internal programs such as the wastewater treatment operator training program and the engineering management training program. Mr. Griffin asked about relationships with local high schools. Mr. Stone asked about relationships with local colleges. Mr. Dones explained that the Authority does not have a current relationship with a local high school but does have relationships with local colleges such as Howard University and George Washington University. Ms. Grier indicated that WASA will pursue a relationship with a high school. Mr. Johnson also noted the Authority’s relationship with Covenant House of Washington.

Ms. Roberson asked about the Deputy General Manager/Chief Engineer position and inquired if the incumbent would be leaving in the fall. Mr. Johnson advised that the current Deputy General Manager has agreed to remain until December. Mr. Johnson announced that he is currently considering restructuring the Deputy General Manager position to better reflect current organizational needs. Mr. Griffin requested that the General Manager inform the Board of his plans at the September meeting.

Ms. Wiggins provided an update on the Authority’s Succession Planning efforts and the Employee Climate Survey (Focus Group) Recommendations. The Authority has engaged a consultant, Red Oak Consulting, to assist in the development of the Succession Planning and Executive Development processes. In the meantime, steps are being taken to capture the knowledge of an aging and retiring workforce and implement strategies to replace employees in the short term. Poor communication was the resounding theme from the focus group of employees. Several initiatives are underway to address this concern. Customized 2-way communications training has been implemented for all employees, plasma screens have been installed in major locations to allow for instant communication of important information and the General Manager has conducted the first series of four meetings to provide and receive information with employees.

Mr. Johnson requested that the Human Resources Report be presented by exception, noting that staff would respond to questions from Committee members. There were no questions.

The General Manager reviewed the Human Resources/Labor Relations Committee Workplan and commented that most items are complete or on schedule. Mr. Griffin referred to item 2-2.1 on the Work plan which referenced the Committee's meeting with the union presidents and recommended that the meeting be scheduled in September. Mr. Griffin, also briefly discussed the time period for the General Manager's performance review.

The General Manager advised the Committee of the resolution of a complaint by former employees. The employees felt that their retirement calculations should have included night differential as a part of "basic pay" and therefore reflected in the calculation of their retirement annuity. The Office of Personnel Management has issued a determination that the employees are not entitled to the calculation, that night differential is not included in basic pay and that their retirement is and has been correctly computed.

The General Manager also committed to providing draft revisions to the Personnel Regulations and will submit the revisions in the near future.

Mr. Griffin then requested that the Committee meeting move to executive session to discuss labor negotiations.

The meeting was reconvened at 12:14 P.M.

Having no other business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15PM.