



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Human Resources and Labor Relations  
Committee*

*March 18, 2009*

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Committee Members**

Anthony H. Griffin, Chair  
Howard C. Gibbs  
Kathleen Boucher  
Jacqueline Brown, Ph.D.  
Keith Stone

**Board Members**

David J. Bardin  
Alan Roth

**WASA Staff**

Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager  
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary  
Barbara A. Grier, Assistant General Manager  
Avis M. Russell, General Counsel  
Katrina J. Wiggins, Human Resources Director  
Michelle Buckmire, Benefits Manager

Anthony H. Griffin, Chairman, called the Human Resources and Labor Relations Committee (the Committee) to order at 10:50 A.M.

Michelle Buckmire, Benefits Manager, presented a follow-up report on the domestic partner benefits proposal. She discussed requirements that other jurisdictions and companies imposed to provide domestic partner benefits. Ms. Buckmire noted that the Council of Governments (COG), DC government, Montgomery County, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), PEPCO, Washington Gas and Verizon all provide domestic partner benefits. She also pointed out that Prince George's County, WSSC and the State of Virginia do not offer these benefits to employees.

Ms. Buckmire stated that the Authority's current providers would allow the addition of the benefit during the current plan year with no additional costs but noted that this benefit may impact premium costs when the Authority re-negotiates its contracts. She presented information pertaining to the insurance provider's specific requirements regarding the definition of a domestic partner and proof of eligibility required to qualify

for the benefit. CIGNA Medical, Kaiser Medical and CIGNA Life require that employees provide a notarized affidavit regarding the existence of a domestic partnership. Four of WASA's insurance carriers require that the domestic partners not be related by blood. CIGNA Medical and Life require two proofs of financial interdependency and one year of shared residency. Kaiser Medical requires a six-month waiting period before an employee can add a new domestic partner after terminating the relationship with another.

Board member, David Bardin, asked if the benefit for District employees was more liberal than the one proposed for DCWASA. Ms. Buckmire pointed out that the District is more liberal because it allows domestic partners to be related by blood. Mr. Griffin asked how domestic partners living in Virginia (where a domestic partnership is not recognized) register their partnership in DC. Ms. Buckmire explained that anyone can register their domestic partnership in the District even if they live in another jurisdiction.

Committee member, Howard Gibbs, asked which DC Agency is responsible for handling the registration of domestic partnerships. Ms. Buckmire acknowledged that the DC Department of Health and Human Services has this responsibility.

Mr. Griffin questioned the July 1, 2009 start date. Ms. Buckmire stated that the July 1, 2009 date is the earliest date that the benefit could be offered. Mr. Griffin stated that the new benefits should coincide with the new plan year, January 2010.

Committee member, Jacqueline Brown, asked about the role of the Unions in this process and the financial impact on union members not interested in the benefit. Stephen Cook, Labor Relations Manager, replied that this is a benefit that must be negotiated with the Unions before it is implemented. Board member, Alan Roth indicated that the Authority needs more information on cost increases before adding the benefit. Mr. Griffin asked if the benefit could be implemented for nonunion employees. Jerry N. Johnson, General Manager, acknowledged that the benefit could be offered to non-union employees but there needs to be more internal review of the options before recommending a specific course of action.

Committee member, Kathleen Boucher asked why the Authority was not considering adding a domestic partner benefit to the Authority's current retirement plan similar to Montgomery County. Mr. Johnson indicated that the Authority does not have a defined benefit program but some employees participate in the federal Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). WASA employees must comply with the CSRS rules.

Mr. Roth thanked the General Manager and staff for working so quickly on this issue. He indicated that his major concern with the proposal is that he does not want to allow the insurance companies to define domestic partner for WASA or what documentation will be required. He suggested that the Authority negotiate with the carriers to resolve these issues.

Mr. Griffin asked the Board members if they agreed with the Authority's proposed definitions and required documentation. Mr. Roth indicated that he did not object to the proposed definitions, however, he would like staff to rethink its list of required documentation.

Mr. Bardin asked why WASA could not just piggy back on the DC government's program "since we are all D.C. Government Agencies". Mr. Johnson reminded the Committee that District employees pay 100% of the cost of this benefit.

Dr. Brown reiterated her request that staff research the financial impact on employees who either choose not to participate in the benefit or whose Union does not accept the benefit when it is offered during negotiations.

Mr. Griffin indicated that the Committee would continue these discussions at the May Committee meeting.

Having no further business the Committee adjourned at 11:45 a.m.