



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
*Human Resources and Labor Relations
Committee*

June 8, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members

Anthony Griffin
Kathleen Boucher
Alan Roth
F. Alexis H. Roberson
Howard Croft

Senior Staff Present

George Hawkins, General Manager
Christopher Carew, Chief of Staff
Meena Gowda, Acting General Counsel
Linda R. Manley, Secretary to the Board

Other Board Members

Alethia Nancoo
David Lake

Union Presidents Present

Jonathan Shanks, AFGE 872
Jeffrey Crosson, AFGE 2553
Michelle Hunter, NAGE

Anthony H. Griffin, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 11:22 a.m.

Christopher Carew introduced Clifford Mustaafa Dozier, DC Water's new Labor Relations Manager.

Union Presidents:

Michelle Hunter informed the committee that Barbara Milton, President of AFGE 631 was ill and unable to attend. She noted that the second agenda item (DC Water's Transparency) was Ms. Milton's and asked that the topic be deferred until the next meeting. The Committee agreed to do so.

1. DC Water's Hiring Practices

AFGE 872 President Jonathan Shanks stated that his union membership was concerned about how candidates are selected. He noted that he had brought these concerns to Assistant General Manager Katrina Wiggin's attention and that he would like to give her an opportunity to address those issues. He did note what he believed to be a change in practice regarding how candidates are initially qualified for a position. He asserted that when DC Water was a part of DPW, those decisions were made by a panel of managers who understood the position. Now one person in HR makes this determination and they often do not know about the job.

Mr. Roth asked Mr. Shanks to clarify whether he was talking about the initial determination of qualifications or the actual hiring.

Mr. Carew indicated his belief that one individual in HR makes the initial determination regarding whether an individual is qualified for the position he/she had applied for.

Mr. Griffin explained how his jurisdiction conducts screenings for internal candidates. He noted that HR conducts initial screenings by matching resumes to job descriptions. HR then would rank the applications in three groups: highly qualified, qualified and not qualified. The hiring manager could interview both highly qualified and qualified individuals for the position.

Ms. Roberson indicated that during her tenure with the District Government it was the same process except that the hiring manager would have to provide a written justification if the individual selected was from the qualified group and there had been highly qualified candidates referred.

Ms. Hunter indicated that her membership is concerned that DC Water is hiring individuals who have Bachelor Degrees for positions that used to be considered entry-level. She believes that this practice has negatively impacted the advancement opportunity for internal candidates without degrees. She indicated that years ago the Authority had a cross training program to assist employees who wanted to advance to allow them to learn new areas of work. She indicated that she was unsure if the program still existed and indicated that she thought that the Training Director was responsible for the program. Mr. Croft asked whether Ms. Hunter was referring to outside hires being placed into entry level positions or internal promotions. She replied that she was referring to both.

Ms. Roberson pointed out that unfortunately, the current nature of the job market was that individuals with degrees were willing to accept entry level positions.

Mr. Griffin asked whether DC Water advertises internally or externally for entry level positions. Denyse Jeter-Williams, Staffing Manager, stated that the decision is made by the hiring manager. If the manager believes that there are qualified internal candidates, he/she can choose to post position only internally.

Mr. Croft asked the Authority's position on hiring new employees versus promoting current employees. Mr. Carew indicated that DC Water's main consideration was to find the most qualified individual for each position.

Mr. Croft indicated that he believed that the process should start internally and extend externally only when there are no qualified internal candidates. He then asked what type of programs DCWater have for employees to further develop their knowledge and skill.

Mr. Carew reiterated that the organization's goal is to get the best person for the job and there is value to promoting from within. He stated that DC Water has an impressive array of classes and opportunity for staff to pursue personal and professional development. He offered to provide the Committee with a copy of DC Water's most recent training catalogue. He also outlined several instances in which DC Water created positions in the Executive Office to leverage talent within the organization.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Griffin asked that the Authority provide the training manual to all of the Board members in electronic format.

Mr. Roth asked what procedure DC Water used when determining which individual is hired. Ms. Jeter-Williams gave an overview of the hiring process and indicated that candidates are scored independently by each individual on a hiring panel based on ten questions and a point system from one to five.

Mr. Roth asked Ms. Hunter to suggest how the Authority bridges the gap between internal positions and hiring the most qualified individual for the position.

Ms. Hunter stated that there use to be a program where employees that were in school could sit and train with employees who are working in their field of study in order to gain experience.

Mr. Shanks indicated it is always better to promote from within. Qualifications are set too high. Entry level means learning on the job. He believes that DC Water employees who

are not given the job are then required to train the person from the outside that gets the job. He stated that the new requirement to have all water service workers obtain a commercial drivers license is unreasonable and unnecessary.

Mr. Croft stated that there should be a process in place to get the best person in the job while allowing existing employees to move up within the organization. Union and Management should create a partnership and jointly develop a new process that will increase the possibility of internal promotions. He asked what other processes were in place to deal with issues such as these. He noted that in the past he has worked with labor and management in a partnership to deal with issues such as these. He concluded by suggesting that the first step the Authority should take was to determine if partnerships with the unions to deal with issues like this will work.

Mr. Carew stated that he was not averse to working with the Unions on developing a process.

Mr. Griffin stated that in his jurisdiction they have what are called "under filled positions". The positions create opportunity for individuals to move either vertically or laterally. Employees in those positions are on probation and must successfully fulfill the requirements of the job. Failure to do so, results in their being removed from the position. He suggested that this program may work at DC Water as well. He also noted that he is always impressed at the number of employees with long tenure at the Authority.

Ms. Hunter agreed that the Authority did have a lot of long term employees. She noted that she was a long term employee herself. She concluded that there are a lot of employees who have much to offer the Authority but that they were often overlooked.

Mr. Shanks noted that the new projects being undertaken by the Authority will result in a large number of contracts. He commended both Mr. Roth and Ms. Roberson for their efforts in advocating the local companies be given those contracts.

Update: Team Blue Projects

Mr. Carew reviewed the creation of the Team Blue concept and its organization. He also presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Team Blue Project and gave a presentation on the two Team Blue Projects – Asset Management and Safety -- that are currently underway.

Action Item: Mr. Griffin requested Mr. Hawkins include the Team Blue Projects as part of his General Manager's report at the next Board meeting and that a copy of the PowerPoint presentation be provided to each of the Board members.

Mr. Croft said that the employees are an organization's best asset. He indicated that he did not see the Unions role in the Team Blue projects and the Unions should be part of the leadership of the Team Blue Project. He also noted that management and the unions do not have the best relationship and suggested that part of the Team Blue project should be to work together to resolve the internal promotion issue. He suggested that benchmarks may be found from both public and private companies and that using them will assist DC Water to improve its processes in this regard.

Mr. Griffin announced that the next meeting of the HR Labor Relations Committee will be held in September and that the Union Presidents would again be placed on the agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:36 p.m.