

Call to Order:

This meeting was called to order in the Vilas County conference rooms at 4:31 P.M. by Chairman Jim Behling with the following committee members present: Emil Bakka, Ed Bluthardt, Jr., Bob Egan, Sig Hjemvick, Erv Teichmiller and Linda Thorpe.

Others present during this meeting: Martha Milanowski, Ken Anderson, John Helgeson, Rachel White and David Alleman. A signature list of 39 Vilas County employees in attendance is attached as an addendum to the minutes.

Open meeting notices and quorum present verified by the Chairman.

Approve agenda to be discussed in any order by the Chair:

Motion by E. Bakka, 2nd by L. Thorpe to approve the agenda to be discussed in any order by the Chair. All voted aye. Carried.

Approve minutes of the April 7, 2011 meeting:

Motion by E. Teichmiller, 2nd by S. Hjemvick to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2011 meeting as presented. All votes aye. Carried.

Employee compensation and benefits:

a. Paid Time Off – draft policy;

The Chair presented a Paid Time Off (PTO) draft/template for discussion. This policy provides for two classes of PTO days. PTO-1 days include current policy holiday time off, vacation days, personal days and sick days. PTO-2 days would encompass accrued time off to be used for extended sick leave. A limited number of annual PTO days could be “sold back” to the county. PTO accrual and payout at retirement would continue in some fashion, with the costs to the county possibly annuitized. PTO days would be capped at an amount to be determined. Employees would manage their use of PTO days subject to guidelines to be determined and would be able to make choices relative to future accrual, etc. The Chair also presented a report indicating that the current amount of unfunded sick time totals over 1.2 million. He also presented a copy of the Shawano County PTO policy. He then called for discussion.

E. Teichmiller - felt that the concept promoted flexibility for both sides. The annuity concept could solve retirement payout budget issues.

J. Behling – policy provides an incentive for employees to use sick days as sick days and puts time off management into the employees hands.

E. Bakka – wondered how and who would manage a PTO program.

J. Behling – PTO program management would fall under the purview of a future HR Manager.

S. Hjemvick – would like additional time to read and consider the information presented.

E. Bluthardt – also would like additional time to consider the information presented. He would also like to be presented with current time-off costs.

E. Teichmiller – asked the audience if anyone had previously worked under a PTO system. Four person responded affirmatively.

Kate Gardner – PTO time worked well. Only issue was when all time was used up.

Joe Fortmann – Wrote a program for a previous employer to track and manage PTO.

Laura Rozga – worked under a PTO system in Oneida County. Initially not well received by the employees, but acceptance increased as time went on.

Ken Anderson – could PTO time be donated to other employees needing the benefit?

S. Hjemvick – PTO taken in one hour increments would be difficult to manage.

Chris Kamps – at retirement could accrued PTO be rolled into a deferred compensation plan?

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J. Behling – retirement payout via an annuity may serve the same purpose as a rollover into a deferred compensation plan. An annuity would also allow the county to fund the payouts over time with budgeted dollars.

E. Teichmiller – what about employees that quit earlier, would they receive some sort of PTO compensation?

Jim Jefferson – county employees work different daily hours. How does that affect PTO days and will daily hours worked be standardized?

E. Bluthardt – how would the county switch from the current system to a PTO system? What happens to current time off on the books?

J. Behling – I am not advocating any loss of current accrued time off.

M. Milanowski – a conversion policy could be formulated. Other counties have done this.

E. Bluthardt – one conversion option would be to buy back current accrued time off.

B. Egan – concerned about income tax burden on employees who would be paid out.

Peter Heller – taxable and non-taxable payout options are available now.

E. Teichmiller – I would like to see a copy of Oneida County's PTO policy.

E. Bluthardt – is there any current method to prepare or budget ahead for retirement payouts?

Ken Anderson – should consider offer of additional PTO days as part of county recruitment / hiring practices.

J. Behling – that could occur. Shawano County follows that practice at hiring.

Louis Dreger – new hires should start with the minimum offered and work up to more days off, just like the rest of us have had to.

E. Bluthardt – I suggest that we consult with the Oneida County HR Director regarding their PTO policy.

E. Bakka – need more time to consider all of this material.

E. Teichmiller – recommends meeting weekly. All conversation so far has been beneficial.

Motion by E. Bluthardt, 2nd by L. Thorpe to prepare a draft PTO Policy for the next meeting. All voted aye. Carried.

b. Other employee benefits:

Nothing presented.

Employee Handbook:

The Chair called for further discussion or action regarding last weeks review of the current employee handbook.

E. Teichmiller – the points that I raised last week, are they valid for a rewrite? Certain policy exemptions in the handbook relating to Social Services need explaining.

E. Bakka – I suggest using the current handbook as a template to move forward.

S. Hjemvick – uniformity of practice is key, but so is maintaining some flexibility. The current handbook is a good place to begin going forward.

Joe Fortmann – any handbook must be a living document subject to regular review.

M. Milanowski – my office will do a draft rewrite of the current handbook incorporating the items discussed last week.

E. Teichmiller – the problem resolution language in page 19 (handbook) could become part of a grievance policy.

M. Milanowski – problem resolution begins with the immediate supervisor or the department head and ends with the Personnel Committee. This is not the same as the grievance procedures outlined in union contract. Problem resolution policy should be reconsidered after formulation of a new grievance policy.

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E. Teichmiller – a grievance policy could incorporate a more informal first step to encourage immediate resolution.

E. Bluthardt – language on page 19 (handbook) does not constitute a grievance policy.

The Chair asked if any committee action was forthcoming.

Motion by E. Bakka, 2nd by B. Egan to ask Corp. Counsel to prepare a draft employee handbook, incorporating Erv Teichmiller’s points as raised and discussed during the previous meeting, for review and further discussion at the next committee meeting. All voted aye. Carried.

L. Thorpe – on page 17 (handbook) stated hours to be worked are not consistent with practice.

J. Behling – would like some input on resources regarding annuitizing sick day accruals.

S. Hjemvick – WCA may be a good resource for that information.

E. Bluthardt – the meeting being held on April 27 has most of our concerns listed as agenda items.

The committee discussed the WCA-WICMIC meeting to be held on April 27, 2011 in Stevens Point. A number of committee members will attend.

Letters and Communications:

E. Bluthardt is concerned that some County Board members feel that this committee is making decisions beyond the committee’s authority. J. Behling reminded the committee that all action taken by the committee was subject to future County Board approval. S. Hjemvick felt that the committee was working very hard to ensure transparency.

Work rules:

E. Bluthardt – any work rule amendments regarding safe practices, safety equipment and safety apparel should refer to the Employee Safety manual. Who pays for required safety apparel?

E. Teichmiller – committee needs a handbook listing current policies not included in the employee handbook.

M. Milanowski – a number of the policies aren’t specifically employment related.

Future meeting dates:

The committee will meet on Thursday, April 28, on Tuesday May 10 and again on Tuesday, May 17, 2011. All three meetings will begin at 4:30 P.M.

Employee participation:

The Chair recognized employees who chose to speak. Their comments are listed below.

Kelly Lacko – concerned about the purpose of changing to a PTO system?

Linda Small – concerned about the structure of a PTO policy and how current earned time off will transistion.

Janet Christenson – what is the time schedule for these changes to occur once the BRB is in force?

B. Egan – a grievance policy must be in force within 90 days of implementation of the BRB.

Laura Rozga – how is compensatory time computed in a PTO system.

J. Behling – there would be not compensatory time. Overtime would be time and a half with possibly some type of credit to PTO time.

Review and respond to employee correspondence:

Nothing new has been received.

Adjournment:

Motion by E. Teichmiller, 2nd by B. Egan to adjourn. All voted aye. Carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:31 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
David R. Alleman
Vilas County Clerk

Minutes reflect the recorder's notations and are subject to approval by the appropriate board or committee.