

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairwoman Nacerino, Legislators Castellano and Wright

Tuesday

September 15, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 6:30.m. by Chairwoman Nacerino who requested former Legislator Sam Oliverio lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chairwoman Nacerino and Legislators Castellano and Wright were present.

Item #3) Approval/ Personnel Meeting Minutes/July 14, 2015

Chair Nacerino stated that the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4) Discussion/Continued from Aug. 18th Personnel Meeting/Copy of Requests Presented to County Executive: 2016 Personnel Proposals (*Upgrades, Re-Titling, Re-Classification etc.*)

Chair Nacerino stated that discussion ensued at the August Personnel Committee meeting regarding Personnel items that will be coming forward as requests for review and consideration by the Legislature in the 2016 Budget. She stated that she would like to point out that this is not a Budget meeting. She stated none of the considerations put forth will be debated this evening. She stated the sole purpose of this discussion is to apprise the Legislators as to what will be considered during the budget review.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that he and the Administration are still working on the 2016 Budget. He stated he thinks he wrote in a prior memo to Chair Nacerino that any and all of the information he represents may not be able to be acted upon or submitted. He stated in addition a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (Program) (Item #5) was introduced to the County Employees, in an attempt to generate some savings. He stated the deadline for employees to submit applications is Friday, September 18, 2015. He stated that there has been a lot of inquiries regarding the program. He stated that once an application is submitted the request is reviewed with the Department Head and County Executive. He stated that he believes the result of employees taking the Program will result in the need to reorganize within a couple of areas. He stated he is still in an evaluation phase and there is nothing new to present. He stated that the 2016 Budget is a difficult budget.

Chair Nacerino questioned if there are many CSEA request for Title Upgrades.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that there were about as many as there have been in the past. He stated the requests need to be reviewed in their totality. He stated that there will be priorities that need to be addressed.

Legislator Wright stated that in the past the Vacancy Control Committee and their input had an impact in this process. He questioned to what extent is that still the case.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that the Vacancy Control Committee is continued to be used. He stated the Vacancy Control Committee (Committee) members are: the County Executive, Personnel Director and the Commissioner of Finance. He stated before any vacant position is filled, it is reviewed by the Committee to determine should the position be filled and at what level. He continued to elaborate on that process. He stated that the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) is not a retirement incentive. He stated that the VSIP is a program that was offered by Orange County earlier this year. He stated so in addition to the employees who will participate in the VSIP there will be employees retiring as well.

Legislator Wright stated there is not a Legislative Representative on the Committee; was there ever?

Personnel Director Eldridge stated no.

Legislator Wright stated for clarification, the only way the Legislatures has control over the funds to remove them from the budget line is visa vie the Budget Process.

Commissioner Carlin stated yes and no; the resolution to remove the funds from the particular budget line would need to be initiated by the Administration.

Chair Nacerino questioned in terms of the CSEA upgrades, and this was a question she had last year also. She stated in regards to the desk audits and the process initiated and the ultimate decision that is made, there are many people that have approached her, who believe they are deserving of an upgrade. She questioned how are the final determinations made.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that every request is looked at. He stated that the request is brought to the supervisor of the department to have it signed off on, it is then evaluated to determine if it warrants a desk audit. He stated they prioritize the list and work on it from that point. He stated that, currently, there are still desk audits going on. He stated that he fortunately has a staff who handles the desk audit requests that are seasoned. He stated that a desk audit is not required on some of the request. He stated in some cases it is clear that the matter needs to be addressed based on the documentation and the confirmation of the supervisor of the department.

Legislator Wright questioned when will the Legislature get the list of employees who are interested in taking part in the VSIP and the Employees who will be Retiring.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated as far as the VSIP is concerned the list will be compiled after meeting with the Department Head and the County Executive.

Item #5) Discussion/Voluntary Separation Incentive Program

Legislator Albano requested a clarification between the past Retirement Incentive Programs that were offered versus the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that with the past Retirement Incentive Programs, if the employee met the required minimum years of service the State would give additional service

credit from the Pension System. He stated typically it was one (1) month of extra service for each year of services. He stated it was truly an incentive: example, an employee who work for 18 years would get credit for 19 ½ years. He stated that there were probably five (5) or six (6) of those programs offered. He stated however, it was realized that those offers were pretty expensive to do. He stated not only are you incentivizing people to retire, and most of them stay with the employer and insurance needs to be paid for them, additionally in most cases those positions needed to be filled. He stated then there was the “targeted” Retirement Incentives, which the employee would receive the extra time but there needed to be enough savings generated to cover all of the costs. He stated that it was “targeted” in the sense that the employer decided an employee was eligible to take the program or not. He stated that basically the position would need to be eliminated to cover the costs. He stated that was difficult in the Police Departments. He stated then municipalities created their own local incentives. He stated Putnam County offered a couple in the 90’s. He stated the uniqueness of the VSIP is that it is a “Separation” program the word “Retirement” is not used. He stated that the intent is by looking at employees with 5 – 15 years of service that would include employees in tiers 3 and 4. He stated the New York State Pension System now has a tier 5 and 6. He stated both of which are reduced in terms of benefits to the employee and cost to the employer. He stated between a tier 4 and a tier 6 employee there is at least a 8-10% savings on pension costs alone. He stated if you have a tier 4 employee who leaves via the VSIP the employer can still afford to fill that position with a an employee who will come in as a tier 6. He stated that as he mentioned earlier the VSIP being offered in Putnam County was a program that originated by Orange County. He stated that he has had a lot of conversation with the Steven Gross Commissioner of Human Resources in Orange County. He stated in most cases in Orange County they will not be eliminating jobs. He stated in addition to tier 6 versus tier 4 most of those employees are not eligible for retired Health Insurance. He stated that there is a lot of potential savings with the VSIP. He stated that the Personnel Department has received many inquiries.

Former Legislator Oliverio questioned what the incentive is.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated an employee with 5 up to 10 years of full-time County service the employee would receive \$10,000 or for employees with 10 up to 15 years of full-time County service the employee would receive \$15,000.

Chair Nacerino stated she would not be in favor of allowing people who choose to separate and take advantage of the VSIP, to be hired back. She stated that she knows that has been done in the past. She questioned if the County would be prohibited from doing that in this instance. She stated that she believes that defies the purpose of what is trying to be achieved.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated employees that have been brought back in the past have been retirees. He stated most of the employees who participate in this VSIP will not be retirees. He stated that the benefit to the County in bringing retirees back on a temporary basis is that they have a tremendous amount of experience and expertise. He stated often retirees are brought back to assist during a transition. He stated there is no intent with the VSIP to do that.

Legislator Castellano stated that the offer in Westchester County stated if an employee returns to employment in Westchester County they would have to pay the money back.

Legislator Wright stated for clarification that there will be no formal prohibitions to bringing someone back in on a temporary basis.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that is correct, however that is not the intent.

Chair Nacerino stated that she would not support that at any level.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that with the exception of being granted a 211 waiver, which is very difficult to get, there is a limit on what the person could earn if they came back.

Chair Nacerino stated, it is her opinion, that practice defies the whole purpose of retirement and separation. She stated the plus and minuses can be debated. She stated that there are lots of people looking for jobs, so for a person to retire and then come back she is not in favor of it.

Legislator LoBue questioned what the requirements are to be granted a 211 waiver.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that there are two (2) sections of the law that apply sections 211 and 212: the Retirement and Social Security Law. He explained that people refer when speaking to this as the 211, when in fact it involves both sections 211 and 212. He stated that 212 does not require that you approach the State as long as you stay below \$30,000, the employee can be brought back and be employed anywhere. He stated often it involves employing a returning person as a bus driver. He stated the rules were looser before. He stated the rules became stricter in 2008. He stated to bring a person back you need to prove that the person has a special expertise that is not readily available in the employment market. He stated once a person is 65 the 211 requirement no longer applies.

Legislator LoBue questioned what the salary cap would be in a situation such as that.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated the State determines that. He stated it will be included with their approval.

Legislator Wright stated so at the age of 65 and beyond there is no restriction.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated correct. He stated also, if you are a retiree and you return as an elected official the 211 does not apply.

Chair Nacerino stated that she does not have a problem with a person coming back into a different job, per the example as a bus driver. She stated that she does not agree with a person coming back to the job that they left. She believes that practice should be discouraged.

Commissioner Carlin stated that once the list is compiled and approved by the Administration it will come to the Legislature for approval.

Legislator Castellano questioned when was the last time the County offered this program.

Commissioner Carlin stated this is the first time this program has ever been offered in Putnam County.

Chair Nacerino questioned what the advantage is, from the employee perspective in participating in the VSIP.

Commissioner Carlin stated it is an opportunity for people who may want to do something else with their lives or if a person may want to move and this could help them to achieve that.

Chair Nacerino facilitate further discussion on the VSIP.

Item #6) FYI/Putnam County Automobile Accident Report – Duly Noted

Item #7) Other Business- None

Item #8) Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:05P.M. Legislator Wright made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Chair Nacerino. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Trabulsy, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature.