

**MONTGOMERY-OTSEGO-SCHOHARIE
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: April 27, 2005

Location: Howes Cave Administrative Complex

Members Present:

Meredith McNeil
William Strevy
Raymond Halgas
Donald Lindberg
Edward Wesnofske

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Olga Podmajersky
Gilbert L. Chichester
Melissa Morlang

1. Opening

Chairman Halgas opened the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the December 7, 2004 meeting were approved unanimously.

3. Updates to the Employee Handbook

Gilbert Chichester distributed proposed changes to the Employee Handbook as attached hereto. Mr. Chichester explained that the Authority receives Human Resource informational e-mails from AMTEK. A recent e-mail indicated that it was not legal for an employer to require employees to pay for cash shortages. Because the Authority currently makes employees responsible for making up the difference when the cash drawers are short, it was suggested that Section 405 of the handbook be amended to only require the employees to report shortages to the main office.

Edward Wesnofske requested additional language be added indicating that reported instances will be tracked and followed by an inquiry.

Proposed changes to section 410, 414 and 702 were discussed at the December 7, 2004 Personnel Committee meeting.

Section 717 "Flexible Spending Plan" has been proposed to be included as a new section. This section, as mentioned at the December 7, 2004 meeting, is needed to address the implementation of the Section 125 plan that had been agreed upon and included in the CSEA union contract.

Section 401 of the Employee Handbook relates to the Departmental Hours. Mr. Chichester explained that changing the main office staff work hours to 7:00 – 4:00 would provide better support to the field staff.

Changes in the Employee Handbook are the responsibility of the Personnel Committee except where they have financial impact, which then requires governing board review.

Edward Wesnofske motioned seconded by Donald Lindberg to approve the changes in the employee handbook as attached hereto. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Field Coordinator

Raymond Halgas stated that at the last operations committee meeting the concept of establishing a field coordinator's position was discussed. Mr. Halgas felt that it was appropriate for the personnel committee to discuss the concept. The general consensus of the Operations Committee was that the person should be hired from outside the organization. Mr. Halgas indicated that there was a void between the Executive Director and field staff and supported the concept of hiring a field coordinator.

Gilbert Chichester stated that from a historical perspective the organization originally had a Director of Operations, a Facility Manager in Otsego County and a Facility Manager in Montgomery County. The Director of Operations position was vacated and abolished. Over time both facility managers left the organization. When the Authority began contracting out the transportation function the Transportation Supervisor assumed the vacant role of the facility manager and oversaw the equipment maintenance and buildings and grounds functions. He was subsequently terminated and the position was abolished.

Seeing the need for a field coordinator the decision was made to promote someone from within the organization. This approach was taken given the fact that the Governing Board did not want to increase the budget. Due to the individuals lack of administrative experience it was not successful.

Mr. Chichester agreed that someone from outside the organization should be hired for the position. By union contract the position can be declared as a management position. It is anticipated that the union will not debate the issue as most of the employees support the concept of a field coordinator.

Donald Lindberg stated that the field coordinator can not be at all the stations at the same time. Having a site supervisor at each of the sites is still necessary. Raymond Halgas agreed stating that the field coordinator would work very closely with the site supervisors and would be on the road much of the time.

Gilbert Chichester stated that it is hard to change the habits of staff. Doing so requires a constant presence and reinforcement. The coordinator will need to be that constant presence.

Edward Wesnofske asked if the sites had an atmosphere of secrecy whereby site staff is not always informing management of what is happening at their sites. Gilbert Chichester stated the generally people are reluctant to come forward.

Gilbert Chichester reported that he had been told in the past at a site that his presence was cramping the style of the operators. The message was that as long as Mr. Chichester was present staff would conduct themselves properly, however when he was not present they

likely went back to their old ways. Because Mr. Chichester's presence is so sporadic you do not know what is happening at the sites the majority of the time.

Meredith McNeil stated that since he joined the Board he has come to understand that generally the Authority has a good workforce. The issue is that they are workers and not managers. The individual promoted from within had the most potential of taking on the role of field coordinator but it did not work out. In addition to the site supervisors, there is the issue of the equipment maintenance and building and grounds supervisors getting bogged down with the paperwork and planning functions. Mr. McNeil does not like to spend money unless it is necessary and in this case there is a need for a middle manager.

William Strevy stated that he did not feel qualified to comment given his limited experience on the Governing Board. He deferred to the senior members on the Board and from what he is hearing there appears to be a need.

Edward Wesnofske stated that it is a stretch to cover the fieldwork from the main office and be effective. Running the Authority is a risky business, which relates to expecting staff to behave appropriately. Mr. Chichester has stressed the need for training in the organization but it has not been facilitated given the current resources available. It needs to be done. The responsibility lies not merely with the staff but with management and the governing board to assure that the Authority is operated in a safe manner. The lack of training and standard operating procedures creates a weakness that exposes the Authority.

Mr. Wesnofske felt that the staff may resist the new culture trying to be cultivated but it is a worthwhile investment.

Mr. McNeil indicated that the last time the need was identified the Board tried to correct it with someone internally without the use of additional resources. That was not successful and it is time to look outside the organization and invest in the concept.

Olga Podmajersky stated that she was not in favor of utilizing the internal candidate the last time feeling that there would be a problem and there was.

William Strevy felt that making the site supervisors more responsible would be less problematic than adding a layer in the organization. Gilbert Chichester stated that the current supervisors are not trained to handle the role and trying to force it on them would be overwhelming.

Olga Podmajersky felt that Mr. Chichester should go to each transfer station and train for a couple of days.

Raymond Halgas stated that he could relate the need for the field supervisor to his job at the City of Amsterdam. The supervisors working for him do not have the experience to make decisions. Making the decisions and setting the direction is what Mr. Halgas's responsibility is at the City. A similar person is needed at MOSA.

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Mr. Chichester reiterated that the Site supervisors are working supervisors. They do not have the time to take on any additional tasks. For example, it does not make sense to have supervisors handling regulations on their own. It is more appropriate to have the field supervisor perform that function for all the sites.

William Strevy felt that additional responsibility should be added to the site supervisors. If they can not perform under those circumstances then they should be replaced. Mr. Chichester stated that he did not feel that to be the most appropriate approach. Getting rid of employees in that manner is not as easy as it sounds. Proper documentation is required and support must be given in terms of training staff. Mr. Chichester felt that based upon his 12 years of experience at the Authority a middle manager is required. It is not reasonable to simply place more responsibility on the site supervisors and there are other tasks needing attention.

Edward Wesnofske stated that the skills needed in a field coordinator were much different than those that exist in the current site supervisors. The field coordinator skills are not needed everywhere.

Gilbert Chichester stated that in terms of the equipment maintenance and buildings and grounds, issues are identified but the existing staff alone could not always appropriately set priorities and plan tasks.

William Strevy felt that likely the site supervisors would not cooperate with the field coordinator. Gilbert Chichester stated that if they don't cooperate they will be written up and the process for disciplinary action will be initiated.

Meredith McNeil felt that the financial impact on the Authority needed to be addressed.

Donald Lindberg stated that his expectation of the impact of having a field coordinator would be that every time he visits a site the procedures would always be followed. If things did not improve at the site by having a field coordinator, Mr. Lindberg would not be happy.

Gilbert Chichester stated that by having the field coordinator observing the operations a conclusion might be drawn that the current expectations of site staff are not reasonable. It may be possible that expecting every ticket to be monitored is not appropriate. Melissa Morlang stated that it might take a while for the Board and management to see results from hiring a field coordinator. As had been mentioned, it is not an easy task to change the habits of staff.

William Strevy stated that if an operator is observed doing something wrong both the operator and site supervisor are told about it. If it is observed twice it is the site supervisor who is ultimately responsible for not having fixed the problem. Mr. Chichester stated that the field coordinator would be the one talking to the site supervisor and developing accountability.

William Strevy felt that having the middle manager would create animosity among the workers because ultimately the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the site supervisors. Gilbert Chichester stated that the site supervisors need to be held accountable.

The equipment maintenance and buildings and grounds supervisors were in favor of the field coordinator. Other site staff have expressed similar support for the position.

Donald Lindberg stated that if the coordinator wanted to sit down with the site staff or supervisor there would not be time enough during the day to do that. Mr. Chichester stated that those types of meetings could take place at the end of the day.

Donald Lindberg felt that it was extremely important that the field coordinator be supported so as to be successful.

Raymond Halgas stated that we might have to work through a few people before we find the best candidate for the position. Mr. Chichester stated that it may take a few advertisements and rounds of interviews to find qualified candidates. Mr. Wesnofske stated that the candidate would need to learn the solid waste business and the Authority's operations. This will be a difficult task.

Meredith McNeil motioned seconded by Donald Lindberg directing the Executive Director to develop a job description and pay scale for the field coordinators position and present it at the next personnel committee meeting. The motion passed with four voting in favor (McNeil, Lindberg, Halgas and Wesnofske) and one voting against (Strevy).

5. Executive Director's Contract

Motion by Raymond Halgas seconded by Donald Lindberg to go into executive session to discuss the executive director's contract. The executive session began at 5:16.

Motion by Raymond Halgas seconded by Donald Lindberg to come out of executive session. The meeting resumed at 6:16.

6. Closing

Raymond Halgas motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Donald Lindberg and unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Morlang
Director of Finance and Administration