

OPERATIONS & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2012
5:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Kevin Meachum
Patty Cox
Verzell Taylor
Mark Wicklund
Susanna Zimmerman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Merv Jacobs
Melverta Wilkins

COUNTY PERSONNEL PRESENT

Jay Dunn, Board Chairman
Amy Stockwell, Auditor
Linda Koger, County Board Office

This meeting was called to order by Chair Meachum at the Macon County Office Building. He said Merv Jacobs called saying he had a prior engagement tonight, and would not be here. Also Robyn McCoy called, and she had nothing to present or bring forward to committee.

MINUTES

Motion to approve minutes of prior meeting made by Mark Wicklund, seconded by Verzell Taylor, and motion carried 4-0.

APPROVAL OF PAYROLL AND CLAIMS

Motion to approve presented payrolls made by Mark Wicklund, seconded by Susanna Zimmerman, and motion carried 4-0.

Motion to approve the claims made by Mark Wicklund, seconded by Verzell Taylor, and motion carried 4-0.

REPORTS

Auditor

Amy Stockwell reported the outside auditors are here in the third floor conference room, one thing that affects the work of this committee is every year they have each department report on the accrued time that each employee has, they prepare a summary of that and keep the records for the year end balances on each individual. If committee has questions for the outside auditors, they would love to talk to you, and are available for you to call or stop in and see.

(Patty Cox came into the meeting.)

Amy said they continue to work on wellness, she passed out flyers at the board meeting regarding helping to sponsor employee participation in the heart walk April 14, and other activities are expected this spring.

She is helping the chairman with the quarterly supervisors meeting tomorrow at 11:30 a.m., and this committee is invited. She continues to work on the handbook, hasn't made much progress the last month because of getting the year closed and the audit, is through the worst of it, and her year is divided into auditing and budgeting.

Following bills were presented for approval; \$941.50 bill from Newell's for repairs on our vehicle for an accident involving Animal Control with a third party involved that has been settled; \$1,763.98 for a single vehicle incident involving Probation, they did get three estimates, and that was the best; three bills from Travelers all related to legal expenses connected with defending us on various matters for \$9,213.20, \$405, and \$5,609.54. Amy said she has been directly involved in some of the claims management with Travelers, is super impressed with their approach, and could not be any happier with how they approach these cases and our liability or lack of liability. Motion to approve made by Patty Cox, seconded by Verzell Taylor, and motion carried 5-0.

Resolution Accepting Proposal from Hartford Insurance for Property & Inland Marine Insurance
Copies of resolution and proposal were distributed. Amy said it insures the buildings we own, Highway, some minor things since most of the main buildings are the Building Commission, the buildings that we own, contents that are not owned by the Building Commission, that is the property policy; the inland marine the way she thinks about it is stuff not attached to the building but isn't licensed to be driven like trucks, voting machines, and she has a whole schedule on inland marine. Much of the highway equipment is covered on that schedule because it is not actually, it's the construction equipment. We have been with Hartford a number of years, they continue to give us a deal we are happy with, total premium for the two policies went up by \$256 a year, and it is about a \$26,000 bill. During this year they did evaluate what we were insuring at the Health Department and increased the coverage there, continue to maintain the property list including all the stuff at the Health Department, and it is less than 1%. Motion to approve made by Mark Wicklund and seconded by Verzell Taylor. Mark Wicklund asked if the commission has been the same or increased, and Amy replied it is the same. In response to a question from Patty Cox regarding how long we have been with Hartford, Amy will have to look that up but it has been more than 5 years. Patty Cox asked how much the increase has been over that period of time. Amy replied we have had several years where it was very minimal, we continue to expand the list of things that we are covering so it has crept up because we are insuring more, we maintain a continuous inventory that we add to all the time, work with departments to let us know when they dispose of things, they go through periodic physical inspections to make sure their list is right, and she believes we have got it rounded up.

Regarding the auditing process Amy mentioned earlier, Mark Wicklund asked on the hourly for the year, is that all offices. Amy replied all offices and all employees, and if you are employed by Macon County they expect a piece of data from the officeholder on all employees. More towards the Court and State's Attorney's offices, Mark asked if they are on that. Chair Meachum commented we will hold that, we need to vote on this, we have a motion and second on this resolution, and the question is not on this resolution. Mark said he thought we had voted on that. Chair Meachum called for a vote, and motion carried 5-0.

Mark Wicklund is curious as to how they track their hours for their employees as to where we intend to have time clocks in here. Amy replied she is not sure how they do it, at the sheriff's office they have a monthly worksheet and record the time, i.e. off sick for a doctor's appointment or personal day or earned comp time, they do all that every month, employee and manager signs off, so they have all that support; she doesn't know what the State's Attorney keeps and for Mark to remember that the Court, the judges, are not our employees.

County Board

Board Chair Dunn brought up a subject that he previously brought up a few months ago when he said he would check it out more, the State's Attorney's office has a person that for the last 7 years has been working at home getting paid. He is not sure if they ever come into the county building, but just the idea somebody working at home for that long brings up an issue that needs to be addressed. The person supposedly has a full time business also, he is not going to say he is totally against nobody working at home period, but under certain circumstances there might be a reason why somebody could work at home for a certain time but he thinks it would be brief. For the oversight committee and board members not to be aware of this, it has been going on for 7 years, and he thinks it is a huge problem; as Chairman of O&P and also it works out being Vice Chair, he is asking Chair Meachum to check with all the departments and elected official offices to see if this is unique to that office. He has heard in the past there has been a couple cases where people might have worked at home because of illness where it was a short term thing which the board needs to be aware of this, and the oversight committee needs to be aware of this.

Chair Meachum asked if it is affecting the service over there, the service of people answering the phone or people coming into the office. Board Chair Dunn replied he is not sure, and he just has a problem with somebody working at home. Patty Cox commented if they are hired to work here, they should be working here, it is an exception if someone is sick or has a medical problem, but 7 years is a long time. Chair Meachum commented the situation we have, the way he has reviewed the employee handbook is, the handbook does not cover offices of elected officials; they can adopt our handbook if they so desire but if they do not adopt it, we cannot enforce, the County Board cannot enforce elected officials' offices work habits. Patty Cox doesn't think we can the elected officials, but not the employees who work there. Chair Meachum replied they are not union, are all management, and in the particular case that Jay is talking about, every employee in the State's Attorney's office is management employees, and they are not union.

Chair Meachum commented what we need to do is he will get with the auditor to find out the phone numbers of each officeholder, and ask them what their practices are; we only work 35 hours a week, he wants to know if they have any employees working outside the office short term or say they are on light duty and it would be a lot easier to do work from home, he understands that since that is short term, and he wants to know how often this is really occurring in each office. Patty Cox commented we need to have that in writing, and need a memo to go out to each department. Chair Meachum agreed he can request in writing if they have employees working outside the office and how often it occurs if that is the wish of this committee since he is not going to do it unless it is the will of this committee, and he asked if that is what they would like to do. Patty Cox replied she thinks we should. Chair Meachum commented he is not disagreeing, but he is not going to take it upon himself without asking this committee since this committee is more than one person and not just him but is everybody here.

Board Chair Dunn said another issue is, somebody had mentioned it to him a couple months ago which kind of flew over his head and he never checked it out, but it came up during a candidates' forum the other night. Question was asked one of the candidates about why no one was answering the phone on some Fridays over at the State's Attorney's office, and he guesses the policy over there, they call it a perk, is to let some employees go an hour early. Amy Stockwell commented all of the employees. Board Chair Dunn understood it as all the employees but is not sure it is exactly all, but they were all offered to go home an hour early possibly a couple times a month because of, and the question was asked or brought up, and the answer that because of the county's lack of ability to give pay increases; he has a big issue with this too, should have checked it out earlier, but the county for the most part works 35 hours per week in most departments; he spent a lot of time negotiating a contract with Probation to increase their hours to 37.5, their contract ran out November 30, they asked to go back to 35, and now he is starting to see an understanding of why they asked that because if we have got offices or departments letting people go an hour early a couple times a month when they are only working 35 hours, that is not a justice to the citizens. Board Chair Dunn said he feels bad we are not here 40 hours a week for them, he has worked on negotiations to increase one to 37.5, and plans on trying to do that with some of the others that are coming up shortly. To hear this really bothers him, and it also bothers him when they say it is because the county can't afford raises, that is not true; going back to the Jerry Andrews' remark several years ago when he was giving out 4% raises for seven years, 28% in that period and the 612 clerks here only got 10%, and he said they are professional people; all our people are professional people from the lowest paid person to the top, and they should all be considered professional people. The State's Attorney's office in fact has given out some good raises, he knows some of them haven't got a raise for 2 or 3 years, but that is an administrative thing; some of them have got 8% this year, several were given 8% this year which the oversight Justice Committee wasn't aware of, but we had a couple people get \$5000 raises, have had some that got 36% over the last 5 years, 20%, 21%, 35%, 36%, 22%, and he doesn't want to hear that as an excuse for giving a perk, and really hates to see the county go to this. It sends a bad message to the people that are here every day working 35 hours a week, and it sends a bad message to the public that pays our wages and ultimately are our bosses.

Chair Meachum said we have a couple issues and do not know how widespread it is. Board Chair Dunn replied no, but he would like Chair Meachum to check it out. Chair Meachum commented maybe this committee needs to add another issue in the letter stating we would like to know if this cut out Friday, or letting employees go early on Fridays, or how many part-time employees they have currently working for them, and how many of them if they are part time are the employees getting this perk to leave, and how widespread it is throughout any elected official's office because he doesn't know but what Board Chair Dunn is saying is the State's Attorney is the only one he knows about, but we need to find out.

Patty Cox isn't sure we should state it as elected officials' offices because if you are going to send it out just to elected officials' offices, you have got the Health Department sitting out there, and we are the oversight for them too. Chair Meachum has no problem with sending that out to them. Mark Wicklund commented it should be departments, and Patty Cox agreed departments since it sounds like we are picking on those who are elected so it should go to anybody we do payroll for. Verzell Taylor agreed. Chair Meachum commented we will address the two issues that Board Chair Dunn brought up, and he will email it to committee members for review before he sends it out to make sure he is on the same page that committee is in this meeting; he asked committee if they all agreed to that, he will draft up this week, and will try to get it to committee by the end of the week.

Board Chair Dunn thinks starting the budget season before long, some of us are going to sit down and look at what we are going to look at on this next budget cycle, and we need to know this information before we sit down to start looking at what we want to address during the budget cycle; he is certainly against micromanaging somebody's department, he doesn't do that, never liked it when he ran work, there are certain things we can do and should do, certain things you shouldn't, and these are two issues that need to be addressed.

Chair Meachum commented we will look into them countywide and see what kind of response we get back. In the years we were in financial problems and couldn't afford, Patty Cox commented we did give them extra paid days off. Chair Meachum said that was contractual. Patty Cox doesn't think that was contractual, and we just gave it as extra holidays off to compensate, yes we did if you go back and look at minutes, there were some years we did give extra days for everybody. Chair Meachum replied but we put it in their contract for the contractual ones he believes, but we had a letter go out as reciprocating to management. Patty Cox added that is how we kind of compensated with extra days off, we cautioned when we did it and said it is hard to take it back, and this is what has happened. Board Chair Dunn commented that is what he has to deal with when he deals with these negotiations, most everybody is working 35 hours a week where normally people work 40, that is five less hours the public has to come in here, a lot of the public don't get off until 4:30 and we are closed at 4:30; we gave extra holidays, we have a very liberal holiday thing, we have created among ourselves a point where we actually have to pay people overtime because of all the holidays and vacation.

He is not sure that was a great move back then rather than just giving them an increase, that is something he has to deal with when going forward on negotiations, and he would like to see us get back to where we are here more for the public so they don't have to take off work to come here. Chair Meachum said it has become a service issue, serving taxpayers, to make sure we have enough staff to take care of the day to day operations from 8:30 to 4:30.

Regarding the self-help center he set up on the 4th floor, Board Chair Dunn asked to report on it. Mark Wicklund asked to comment before going on to that; this issue with the departments was brought up during the last Finance budget hearing, he brought this issue up several times on pay raises, who is being paid out, it was addressed at every meeting including Justice, and at the time he brought it up he had researched every department affiliated with the Justice Committee to go through all their departments to see where the raises were handed out and where they weren't handed out; they were all justifiable to the point of the state's attorney's office had made the comment that we haven't given out any raises from the general fund, he has gone through all the budgets in Justice, and the only department that had a major issue was the state's attorney's office; he is all for moving forward keeping all departments accountable for this, and he thought you would like to know this was discussed earlier.

Once the letter is sent out, Chair Meachum commented hopefully they will respond, we should give them at least 10 days to research and get it back to us within 10 days; he asked if that is a reasonable time to get back and tell us no we do not do it or yes we do and here is why and the reason why, and they better have a good reason because it is not consistent. Mark Wicklund thinks by our next meeting date would be sufficient, and Patty Cox agreed. Board Chair Dunn said 30 days is fine with him since at some point he and Keith will sit down to look at what we are going to try and focus on for the next budget cycle, and he would like to know where we are at on those issues. Chair Meachum asked if he wants them turned into the county board office to be compiled for the next meeting, committee agreed, and he will make sure that is in the letter also that they have to return a written response that is signed and dated to the county board office. Patty Cox requested it be signed and dated since the person who researches it, the person over that department could later on come and say I didn't do that, that is not the information I did, so it is better off having it signed and dated.

Regarding the self-help center on 4th floor, Board Chair Dunn set that up because of some of the press on the tax assessments, he didn't get it started until the appeal process was about ended, but he found out from the SOA office that after the deadline they could turn in an appeal the next day for the next year, and they would keep it until the appropriate time. Self-help center is open 4 days per week on the 4th floor, the lady had a lot of business, he hopes to have her report come up at Finance, wanted to give it 60 days, and he thinks it has truly been a benefit; a lot of times the issues are not even county issues but just a misunderstanding on their part, or something wrong with their company that has the loan on their house. We have spent 15 or 20 minutes just to figure out what the real problem is.

An example some guy was irate because his taxes on his house was going to be taxed at \$61,000, actually it was an example of what the SOFA sends out using it as an example, it wasn't his house, so he was pleased when he left after seeing what his property was actually being taxed at. Sitting through the tax cycle the last couple years and concentrating on trying to understand it, it is convoluted and complicated, and he feels the SOFA office is shorthanded; they used to have at least two more if not three more people in there, and over the years those positions got cut. The two gals who work up front are just swamped with people coming in with exemptions, senior exemptions, disability things, and the state has added a lot of exemptions over the years; they are busy and don't have time to sit down with citizens, sometimes it takes 10 – 15 minutes to listen to them to resolve their issues, and it is working out great. He wants to look at incorporating that full time into the SOFA office, and it is working out good so far.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 21, 2012

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Verzell Taylor, seconded by Patty Cox, motion carried 5-0, and meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Linda Koger
Macon County Board Office