

COUNTY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 11, 1996, 2:00 PM

PRESENT: Tom Bacote, Commissioner
Johnnie Evans, Commissioner
H. Mac Tyson II, Commissioner

STAFF: Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager
James Martin, Deputy County Manager
Pat Jones, Personnel Director
Carlisle McCutcheon, Finance Director
Neil Yarborough, County Attorney
Doug Canders, Staff Attorney II
Rhonda Davis, Deputy Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman

Commissioner Johnnie Evans was elected Chairman.

2. Selection of Regular Meeting Date and Time.

MOTION: Commissioner Tyson offered a motion to schedule a regular meeting date, as selected by and subject to cancellation by the Chairman.

SECOND: Commissioner Bacote

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

The regular meeting date was set for the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 PM.

3. Physicians Benefits Package Recommendation.

Pat Jones, Personnel Director reviewed the results of the survey of Area Mental Health Programs in the state. Forty-one surveys were distributed. Twenty-four were returned. She noted the results indicated the Gaston-Lincoln Area Mental Health Program offered a different annual leave accrual for physicians based on time and service. The State of North Carolina accrual for vacation was revised July 1, 1995. The counties with a higher accrual rate compared to Cumberland County are attached to and incorporated into these minutes. A copy of the questionnaire is also attached.

Commissioner Tyson asked staff if they had a recommendation for the Committee.

Mr. Martin stated staff did not feel ready to make a recommendation at this point. Staff merely wanted to share the concerns in this matter. He noted that if the County accepted the State's annual leave schedule, it may help the problem, but he does not feel it will fix it.

Pat Jones noted that in most cases, the mental health agencies follow the county's leave policies. She reviewed each of the charts including a summary of physicians leave benefits in surrounding mental health area programs.

Mr. Martin noted they must consider how appropriate it is to establish a specific leave category just for physicians. He does not feel the leave situation is the only reason physicians are not accepting positions with the County.

Commissioner Tyson stated he would suggest the Mental Health Department's problem is similar to the one you may find with the hospital. It may be the very department itself and the way it is run may be the reason physicians are not accepting positions with them. They may want to consider looking at how the department is run and if the department is conducive to employment with the County.

Mr. Martin asked if any of the committee members had a recommendation.

Mr. Strassenburg noted Mr. Miriello seems to indicate there is a problem with Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in that they are in competition. The hospital offers thirty days off per year. The thirty days includes annual leave, sick days and holidays. If you consider annual and sick days and holidays, the County has almost thirty days of leave per year. The Mental Health Department recruitment is almost a national recruitment. Some people simply don't want to come to Fayetteville. Salary may also be an issue. Cumberland Hospital and Cape Fear Valley Medical Center have a better pay schedule and supplemental pay based on the amount of patient contact. He also noted the North Carolina Mental Health authority is an autonomous unit. The Mental Health Board can adopt it's own policies. Mental Health employees are really not County employees. The Board of Commissioners need to be extremely careful in deciding whether or not to change the leave policy.

Commissioner Tyson noted some recent discussions during Hospital Board of Trustee meetings concerning special assistance to doctors with retiring student loans, etc. He asked if there was a way to bring recruitment of physicians under one person so that everyone could go in one direction.

Mr. Yarborough noted the State General Statutes dictate the way recruitment is handled for these agencies. Mental Health is a separate autonomous body with it's own governing board. The Legislative Goals Committee is working toward a request that would combine Mental Health, Social Services and Public Health into one agency. Currently, Mecklenburg and Wake are the only two counties in the state with such authority.

Commissioner Evans suggested the committee allow staff to continue to work on and explore this situation.

Mr. Martin recommended that the committee members decide not to take action on this matter at this time.

MOTION: Commissioner Tyson offered a motion that the Committee not take any action with regard to a Physicians Benefits package at this time and to table this item until the Health Care Study is completed.

SECOND: Commissioner Bacote

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Bacote noted he sits on the Mental Health Board and is constantly hearing complaints that they are not able to recruit physicians.
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

4. Update of Classification and Pay Plan Study.

Mr. Martin reviewed the background information with regard to the Classification and Pay Study to be done by David M. Griffith and Associates. The information is attached hereto and incorporated into these minutes. He expects a final report from DMG & Assoc. in April of 1997.

5. Discussion of standards and priorities with regard to Employee Openings or Replacements.

Commissioner Tyson stated he asked this item to be placed on the meeting agenda to determine whether or not the County has standards or priorities for hiring or filling certain positions. He specifically wanted to discuss positions that are filled by persons from outside the County when there are people in a department who have been with the County for several years. These people are often times familiar with all aspects of the work in the office and someone from outside the County is hired and that person has to end up teaching the new person his or her job. That new person would be making more money than the person teaching them the job. He feels the County should look first within the department to fill a position before going outside. Rather than looking for paper degrees, he feels experienced people already employed with the County should fill vacant positions.

Commissioner Evans noted the new Finance Director, Carlisle McCutcheon was serving as the Assistant Finance Director for the County prior to his appointment as Finance Director.

Mr. Strassenburg noted all job descriptions have minimum education and experience requirements. The intent is to hire the most qualified individual to serve the taxpayers of this county. When there is no open recruitment, it leads to an "in-breeding" effect.

Commissioner Bacote stated he feels Department Heads must have the autonomy to hire anyone in their office that they feel is the best qualified person.

Commissioner Evans noted when the County does open positions to the outside public and then hires someone already working for the County, it makes the County look good. He feels the most qualified persons are usually hired.

Commissioner Tyson noted he is concerned that someone who is doing a good job may be passed over and then have to train the new employee.

Mr. Strassenburg stated County employees always have a "home court" advantage in applying for jobs as they are already familiar with operations.

Mr. Yarborough advised the overlay of affirmative action and equal opportunity employment is a concern for the County. The County must do a delicate legal balancing act when filling positions.

Commissioner Tyson stated he wants to make sure the "home court" advantage is recognized.

Mr. Yarborough noted the "home court" advantage is a legitimate job criteria.

Mr. Candors advised Managers have the right and often do announce certain positions in-house, and if a person obtains a higher position, the entry-level position is advertised to the public.

6. Other Committee Concerns.

Mr. Martin advised at the September Personnel Committee meeting, he and Mr. Candors mentioned items in the County's Personnel Ordinance that needed updating or changing. He wanted to advise they will be starting the process at the beginning of the year and will bring all recommendations for changes to the Committee.

Mr. Strassenburg noted a budget amendment on Monday night's agenda concerning seven bailiffs in the Sheriff's Office. They are to be placed in a sworn deputy position. This is a change that needs to be done.

Meeting adjourned at 3:06 PM.