

Civil Service Commission Minutes
Thursday, April 19, 2007

The Civil Service Commission held a quarterly meeting on Thursday, April 19, 2007 in the Board of Supervisors' Chambers, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, California.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to Order: Chair Michael Barsi called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. Attendance: Commissioners present: Chair Michael Barsi, Jack Gordon, Patricia Fink and Judy Jones. Commissioner Robert Taren was absent. Present: Laurie Hill, Secretary to the Commission, Dania Torres Wong, Personnel Director, Liz Morrison, Employment Services Manager, and Personnel Analysts Terri Cobbs, Christa Schleiner, and Nisha Patel.
3. Adjourn to Closed Session: 5:32 pm
4. Return to open meeting 5:40 pm. Request for reconsideration was denied in the case of George B. Jack.
5. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the January 18, 2007 meeting were approved 4-0.
6. Oral Communications: There was no public comment.
7. Secretary Report: Commission Secretary Hill confirmed Commission's receipt of parking passes, updated contact list and materials for closed session. There are no pending hearings before the Commission.
8. Old Business:
 - a. On April 17, 2007 the Board of Supervisors approved the Civil Service Rule revision to the evaluation schedule for 12-month probationary employees. Matter is final.
 - b. On April 17, 2007 the Board of Supervisor approved a 12-month probationary period for the Division Director of Child Welfare Programs.
 - c. Consider Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 521 request to discuss job specifications and job reclassification process. This item was continued from the January 18, 2007 agenda at SEIU's request. Peggy Weaver, Business Agent for SEIU Local 521, discussed survey of members regarding problems with the functioning of the Personnel office with emphasis on areas that the Commission oversees. The survey surfaced concerns regarding classification, wage compaction as a result of parity studies, and outdated job descriptions. She provided a letter from SEIU, dated April 19, 2007 entitled Working Group on Civil Service Reform (attached). Individual employees offered examples of their classification concerns:

- i. Nell Sulborski, Typist Clerk III in Planning, observed that the job specification for Typist Clerk II did not include use of computers and specific computer applications.
- ii. Faye Jahnigen, Chief Radiological Technologist, stated that her job description had not basically changed in 20 years but that she is now expected to handle heavy patient workload and use a computer based data for patient records.
- iii. Rhonda Aiken, Senior Case Data Clerk, was dissatisfied with the results of her request for reclassification. She was denied her request for reclassification to a new specification of Application Registration Specialist and granted a reclassification to Typist Clerk III. She stated that her pay does not match the responsibilities of her job specification.
- iv. Beth Minford, Departmental Information Systems Specialist for Elections, said that the required job tasks do not match the current job descriptions making it difficult to create performance standards for probationary employees and to hire the most appropriate candidate for a job.
- v. Robin Connors, Lab Assistant/Phlebotomist for the Health Services Agency said that her job specification was modified in 2005 and that she was expected to help develop and use an electronic medical information system. She was denied a reclassification to proposed new classification of Laboratory Systems Information and after eight months resigned from her position. She said that staff should not be expected to work outside their job descriptions without additional compensation and that the County will lose competent staff to other employers. She would like Personnel to meet once a month with managers on personnel matters.
- vi. Deborah Shaw, hired as a Departmental Information Systems Analyst to upgrade old computers to the Windows environment. Her request for reclassification to Information Systems Analyst was denied. In 2006 she took part in a classification study which is currently underway. She was recently promoted to Information Systems Analyst. Commissioner Gordon asked whether the system migration process, mentioned by the previous speaker, would typically be managed by Information Systems. Ms. Shaw responded that the Health Services Agency computer systems are changing rapidly. Applications developed by other agencies are purchased and need to be adapted to County's use, sometimes without the assistance of Information Services. She added that all employees are expected to use basic computer skills and that every department requires users that can support the applications in every day use.
- vii. Nancy Elliott, Physician's Assistant at the Health Services Agency, and President of SEIU County Chapter. She offered the letter with proposed solutions (attached) and requested a working group with a couple of Commissioners, representatives from the Personnel office and union representatives to review the concerns and come back to the Commission with some solutions to address these problems. She wants to address access to the Civil Service Commission and methods for the public as well as employees to report problems that they see in the administration of the

Civil Service System. She suggested a Commission website, both Intranet as well as Internet, that employees and public could directly access to express their concerns to the Commission. She suggested that the Commission have independent oversight, and staff independent from the Personnel Department. She said employees were fearful and intimidated to report their concerns. An employee reported a concern and as the concern was forwarded to the department for resolution, it was apparent where the complaint came from. Chair Barsi asked for specifics and Ms. Elliott offered to present her concerns in confidence to him. Chair Barsi said any systemic fear in the workplace about reporting concerns should be addressed. Ms. Elliott asked for a systemic process for members of the public and employees to get information to the Commissioners without having to provide public testimony. Ms. Torres Wong added that commissioners can meet individually with parties but cannot take any action independent from the Commission. It would be appropriate to agendaize their concern and have the Commission provide direction to staff. Ms. Elliott asked that the Whistle Blower program be brought under the Commission, assuming that the Commission would provide independent staff and independent method of communication. Ms. Torres Wong added that the Whistle Blower program was created by the Board under the auspices of the Auditor's office and any changes would have to be made by the Board. Ms. Elliott said that 20% the job specifications should be reviewed and revised as needed each year. Managers should be able to submit their suggestions for updates. Ms. Elliott said she would like the Commission to provide oversight the reclassification process because few reclassifications are made and employees are not being told why their requests are rejected. She asked to continue this topic at the Commission's next quarterly meeting and offered her proposal to establish a working group to address some of these issues. Commissioner Jones noted that the Whistleblower program out of the Auditor's office is deals with the entire public and has little do with the Civil Service Commission. Ms. Torres Wong offered information from the Whistleblower Hotline 2006 Annual report as examples of its use. Ms. Torres Wong asked to return to the next Commission meeting with a follow up report on the issues around reclassification and the history of the actions taken by the Commission on this matter. She added that there is a comprehensive study under way with a consultant on the classification of 39 information systems classifications and the complicated process involves Executive Management, Mid Management and SEIU. Chair Barsi recommended placing this item back on the agenda for July and encouraged SEIU and the Personnel department meet to help define some of the issues. Chair Barsi asked Robin Connors whether there was any communication from Personnel during the 8 month reclassification process. Ms. Connors said that there was communication between her supervisor and Personnel but she was only told that they were "working on it". Commissioner Jones asked for clear direction for the July meeting. Commissioner Gordon characterized the next meeting as information gathering. Chair Barsi asked

Ms. Elliott to get whatever information she had to Personnel so that Personnel would have an opportunity to know what SEIU wanted to address and could provide feedback and streamline the process. Ms. Elliott said without an independent means to communicate to the Commission that SEIU members would be afraid to use their names and this limits the amount of detail that SEIU can present to the Commission. She again suggested the working group because there was more information to come. Chair Barsi again asked that SEIU share the issues with Personnel so that they can be prepared to address the issues in a productive session. Ms. Elliott asked if the meeting with Personnel would include a Commissioner and Chair Barsi responded that the Commission was still at the informational stage but possibly sometime after the July meeting.

9. New Business:

- a. Commission directed staff to return at the October meeting with recommended rule changes and updates for the appeal hearing process.
- b. Commissioner Jones asked for a copy of the Charter of the Civil Service Commission in order to be clear as to the Commission's mission.
- c. Commissioner Gordon asked about contracting out of computer work. Ms. Torres Wong clarified that the MOU is very specific about circumstances under which the County contracts work out. It is limited to professional or work that this County does not do. Commissioner Gordon asked for a copy of that contract language.

10. Reports

- a. Adopted delegated Classification Actions report. Commissioner Jones moved to adopt the report, seconded by Commissioner Gordon. Approved 4-0-1.
- b. The Commission received and accepted Employment Services Division Workload Report.

11. Received correspondence

- a. Letter from the Board of Supervisors dated February 7, 2007 expressing appreciation for the Commission's service.
- b. Letter from SEIU 521, dated April 4, 2007, regarding SEIU Survey of County Personnel Practices.

12. Adjournment: There being no other business or public comment, the quarterly meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Hill, Staff to the Commission