

**STATE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING
VIA WEBEX DUE TO COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY**

MEETING MINUTES – April 1, 2021

Members Present:

Members present on the Webex for the meeting were: Commissioner-Acting Chair Phillip Strach, Rozier, Commissioner Ross Beamon, Commissioner Meredith Benjamin, Commissioner Doug Boyette, Commissioner John Eller, Commissioner Martin Falls, Commissioner Emily Jones, Commissioner April Page, and Commissioner Phillip Strach.

Other Attendees

Other attendees present: Barbara Gibson, Director, Glenda Farrell, Chief Deputy, and Twanetta Lytle Alston, Deputy Director, Office of State Human Resources; Lars Nance, Legal Division, Office of State Human Resources; Denise Mazza, State Human Resources Commission Administrator, Office of State Human Resources; Nancy Astrike, Carol Battle, Felicia Bridges, Andrea Clinkscales, Lisa Coffey, Lorence Crosssett, Dominick D’Erasmus, Scarlette Gardner, Vivian Jackson, Elizabeth John, Jill Lucas, Joe Marro, Paige Pavlik, Carolina Peace, and Kristin Siemek of the Office of State Human Resources; Beth Wood, Auditor, Keita Cannon, HR Director, NC Auditor’s Office; Barbara Baldwin, Assistant State Budget Officer, NC Office of State Controller; Donnell Adams, HR Director, NC Department of Administration; Kathy O’Neal, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services; Glenda Ellerbee, Tammy Penny, HR Director, and Toni Stuckey, NC Cultural Resources; HR Director, David Gaines, Schmett Jones, Kim Sommerdorf, Tony Taylor of the NC Department of Public Safety.

Opening

The Commission convened its open meeting at 9:03 a.m. via Webex Teleconference due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

The State Human Resources Commission (SHRC) last convened on February 4, 2021.

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute Chapter 138A and the North Carolina Ethics Act, Acting Chair Phillip Strach asked all Commissioners if there were any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest with respect to any matters coming before the Commission.

There were no additions or corrections to the agenda for the April 1, 2021 meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Approval of the minutes for the February 4, 2021 State Human Resources Commission Meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Beamon made a motion to recommend approval of the February 4, 2021 meeting minutes.

Second: Commissioner Eller seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission recommended approval of the February 4, 2021 minutes.

Motion carried.

Twanetta Lytle Alston – Exceptions Granted under 25 NCAC 01A .0104 Variances

Deputy Director Twanetta Lytle Alston presented an overview of new COVID and Non-COVID exceptions granted by Director Gibson under 25 NCAC 01A .0104 since the April 1, 2021 State Human Resources Meeting.

Business Session Public Comment

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

State Human Resources Director’s Report

Director Barbara Gibson greeted the Commissioners

Good morning, everyone. Happy spring, happy Passover, happy almost Easter.

Of course, for state government, this time of year is budget season.

As you may know, Governor Cooper announced his proposed budget last week. We carefully considered OSHR’s request, balancing guidance to be fiscally conservative with the reality of needing additional staff and resources to fulfill our mission to provide responsible HR oversight for state government.

This Commission is keenly aware of the responsibilities assigned to OSHR, and how busy we were even before the pandemic. This past year has added a new layer of urgency to providing responsive and data-driven policy and best practices, increasing the challenging workload of our small team.

Inherited staff reductions make it difficult for all of us to keep pace, but I want you know that we have stepped up to support the agencies we serve. It hasn’t been easy, but it has been an honor to do our part to ensure that the important work of state government continues.

To help OSHR continue to serve state employees and agencies effectively, we requested funding for several key positions as well as adequate Salary Adjustment Funds to address hard-to-staff and high-turnover positions, salaries below market rates, gender salary equity, and other salary adjustments identified through analysis using HR best practices.

We have been working diligently with agencies to help them identify and represent their specific needs – and will work directly and collaboratively with legislators to help them understand how urgent these necessary improvements are to effectively recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

But there is more in the budget: Governor Cooper’s budget proposal is clear evidence he values the work of state employees and supports increased compensation. I’d like to share a few key points from his proposed budget :

- Increases salaries by 2.5% in each year of the biennium for most state employees (5% increase over the biennium)
- Increases salaries by 5% in FY2021-22 and 2.5% in FY2022-23 for university, and state-funded local community college employees (7.5% increase over the biennium)
- Provides a \$1,000 bonus in each year of the biennium (\$2,000 over biennium)
- Additional \$2,000 bonus to be paid FY2020-21 for university and state-funded local community college employees
- 2% recurring COLA in FY2021-22 and 2% bonuses in each year of the biennium for retirees – they have not seen increases for many years, so this was a great win
- 5 days of special annual leave for active employees

We will continue to advocate for adequate funding to align compensation more closely to our state’s competitive labor market and to modernize operations for the benefit of all agencies and state employees.

I am grateful to report that The Governor’s Budget also includes OSHR also requested support for significant and desperately needed HR, long-delayed technology improvements that are essential to the functioning of state government as an employer, and it’s critical the employee experience including the way we recruit. would help to consolidate and streamline a broad scope of HR functions – job postings and robust tracking for trends analysis, time and leave reporting, and training resources that would better support career development.

We currently have more than TEN HRIS systems, provided by various vendors which in most cases have already been contractually extended/renewed multiple times. The central HRIS system, SAP (BEACON), is scheduled for vendor retirement.

The importance of the Legislature supporting these items for the long-term success of the statewide HR system cannot be overstated. A coordinated approach to support the Governor’s budget, involving OSHR, HR and legislative professionals at all agencies, and support from our advocates, especially those of you in attendance, will be essential for this projectese topics to get the attention – and funding – that is so critically needed they deserve.

Any support you can lend us 0- or if you need more information, please let us know.

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understand how urgent these necessary improvements are to effectively recruit and retain a qualified workforce.

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Governor Cooper also was supportive of OSHR's request for significant technology improvements that would help to consolidate and streamline a broad scope of HR functions for the state – job postings and robust tracking for trends analysis, time and leave reporting, and training resources that would better support career development.

We will continue to advocate for adequate funding to align compensation more closely to our state's competitive labor market and to modernize operations for the benefit of all agencies and state employees.

Welcome new Commissioner

Before I touch on other topics, I wanted to extend a warm welcome to Commissioner Courtney Cooper-Lewter ("Lou-ter"), who was sworn in prior to this session by North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Michael Morgan and fills the seat vacated by former Commissioner Meredith Benjamin.

Commissioner Cooper-Lewter is a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a master's degree in Social Work and Public Administration. She currently serves as the Management Analyst for Chatham County Manager's Office, where she oversees the disbursement and reporting of the County's Coronavirus Relief Fund.

In her previous roles with Chatham County, Courtney served as the chair for the Chatham Complete Count Committee and researched establishing a community-led human relations commission.

With her keen interest in the intersection of local government and the people it serves, we are excited about the perspective that Commissioner Cooper-Lewter will bring to the State Human Resources Commission. Yesterday we had another Pandemic first...Commissioner Cooper-Lewter was sworn in virtually by Justice Morgan.

, Commissioner Cooper-Lewter, We look forward to working with you, Commissioner Cooper-Lewter, and providing any resources that will support your role.

COVID Restrictions and Vaccine Eligibility

Throughout the pandemic, OSHR has collaborated closely with the Public Health Division of DHHS to establish safety protocols for state employees who must work onsite. In recent weeks,

we have focused on ensuring that all state employees have information about access to the COVID vaccination.

State employees who had not yet received the vaccine became eligible to do so yesterday (3/31). Governor Cooper moved up the eligibility date just last week due to increased supply being provided to North Carolina.

Demand continues to outpace supply, but we strongly and actively encourage all state employees take this opportunity to roll up their sleeve and get vaccinated.

To make it easier for state employees to do this, I have approved a variance that allows employees to get their shot during the workday without losing pay. If someone already used leave for this purpose, their Agency Human Resources Office can make a retroactive correction. Additionally, to allay concerns about potential side effects – which are rare but very real for those who experience them – an employee who becomes ill after receiving their vaccination will have access to limited paid time off to recover. OSHR has provided guidelines to agencies to help them manage this benefit equitably.

Telework Working Group

We are eager for more North Carolinians to be vaccinated and conditions to become safer so agencies can make plans to reopen more of our worksites that have been closed to the public. I know that we all look forward to seeing members of the Commission again when we can conduct these meetings in person.

To address what telework will mean for state employees going forward, OSHR has convened a working group of representatives from Cabinet and Non-Cabinet agencies, as well as the UNC System. Together with our Division Directors and Subject Matter Experts, they will study and update the state's current telework policy. I am guessing you will see that in the near future.

To address what telework will mean for state employees going forward, OSHR has pulled its Division Directors together to collaborate HR leaders from Cabinet and Non-Cabinet agencies, as well as the UNC System, to form a working group to study and update the state's current telework policy.

Teleworking state employees have demonstrated commitment to meeting goals and innovating to provide solutions to challenges we never had to consider in our pre-pandemic work life. Because of this, we are committed to providing a comprehensive structure to manage future telework opportunities.

This won't be as simple as sending everyone home as we did last March. We did that out of necessity and are proud of how well it rolled out. The new telework plan will be more intentional. It needs to take into account a full range of issues from job roles to technology security, productivity, customer service, safety of the remote worksite, equity, culture, impact on new-hires, performance, and other factors.

There are clearly many considerations and many applications across state government. We want to embrace this modern practice, but we need to do it thoughtfully. Teleworking post-pandemic will be a privilege, with the expectation that employees will participate as needed in onsite meetings and activities.

It will take some time to consider all aspects of telework and achieve consensus on a plan, but I did want you to know that this is in the works.

Closing – OSHR highlights:

In closing, I'd like to mention a few OSHR highlights:

- Our Recruitment Team was especially busy last week. The new Ed2NC campaign — which seeks to strengthen the pipeline of diverse skilled college graduates to entry-level jobs in state government whose full name is Higher Education to NC Government Career Initiative — released its first newsletter and launched its website.
 - o Oshr has kicked off a new project, in collaboration with the OSBM Office of Strategic Partnerships and is funded through a grant from the Volker Alliance. It is called Ed2NC which is the acronym for Higher Education to NC Government Career Initiative. The project is a collaboration with the OSBM Office of Strategic Partnerships and is funded through a grant we have also received from funding from the Volker Alliance, to research ways to strengthen the pipeline of diverse skilled college graduates to entry-level jobs in state government.
 - OSHR Recruitment also oversaw a team of agency recruiters who participated gathered for a second year to represent state government in a the national Bender virtual career fair for individuals with disabilities.
 - o The 15 agency recruiters in the State of North Carolina space visited with a total of 128 candidates interested in public service career opportunities.
 - o This is part of Governor Cooper's Employment First initiative and his commitment to create an inclusive and welcoming workspace for individuals with disabilities.
 - Additionally, the Diversity & Workforce Services Team presented a virtual Advanced Mediation Training for at least 172 mediators from agencies, universities and retirees.
 - Our Employee Relations team pivoted quickly to the virtual setting to ensure that the grievance process could continue during the pandemic.
 - o We saw a decline in mediations during the spring of 2019 (pandemic related) but that volume picked up again in the summer and throughout the rest of the year.
 - o It was a successful year for the mediation program because of (1) the quick and effective transition to a 100% virtual process due to COVID-19 as well as (2) the increase in the resolution rate, with 58% of cases being resolved at Step 1.
- I'd also like to mention the Miles for Wellness: Challenge 23, which aims to engage our employees in activity to promote wellness. This is a particularly good year to promote wellness for our employees. Participation is down a bit, but there are 364 teams with more than 3,100 state employees at agencies and locations statewide participating this year.
- I'm happy to report that OSHR has its largest participation ever, with about half of our team members counting steps and using an online tool to convert other exercise and activity into team points. I am proud to say I am counting my steps this year as well.
- Well, I know we have a full agenda today, so I'll turn things back to you, Madam Chair...

Kristin Siemek – Deputy Director/Recruitment: Promotional Priority Policy

Recruiting & Staffing State Recruiting Manager Kristin Siemek presented the Promotional Priority Policy to the Commission. Manager Siemek explained

Chair: There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to recommend approval of the new Applicant Reference Check Policy as presented.

Motion: Commissioner Beamon so moved.

Second: Commission Page seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to recommend the approval of the proposed Applicant Reference Check Policy as submitted.

Motion carried.

Andrea Clinkscales – Division Head/Total Rewards-Salary Administration: Holidays Policy

Total Rewards Division Head Andrea Clinkscales presented the

Chair: There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to recommend approval of the Holidays Policy as revised.

Motion: Commissioner Beamon so moved.

Second: Commission Jones seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to recommend the approval of the Holidays Policy as revised.

Motion carried.

Andrea Clinkscales –Division Head/Total Rewards/Salary Administration: Holiday Premium Pay Policy

Chair: There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to recommend approval of the revisions to the Holiday Premium Pay Policy.

Motion: Commissioner so moved.

Second: Commission seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to recommend the approval of the revisions to the Holiday Premium Pay Policy.

Motion carried.

Dominick D’Erasmus – Manager/Diversity and Workforce Services: Local Government Cleveland County: Petition for Substantial Equivalency

Minutes of the April 1, 2021 State Human Resources Commission Meeting

Chair: There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to recommend approval of Substantial Equivalency Status for Cleveland County in 1 Program Area: Classification and Compensation.

Motion: Commissioner so moved.

Second: Commission e seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to recommend the approval of Substantial Equivalency Status for Cleveland County in 1 Program Area: Classification and Compensation.

Motion carried.

Joe Marro– Manager/Total Rewards: Classification and Compensation: 8 New and 4 Revised Classification Specs

Chair: There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to recommend approval of .

Motion: Commissioner Falls so moved.

Second: Commissioners Benjamin seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to recommend approval of the 8 New and 4 Revised Classification Specifications for the New Class and Compensation System.

Motion carried.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion or questions, the Chair called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Commissioner so moved.

Second: Commission seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was held and all attending members of the Commission agreed to adjournment.

Motion carried. The Commission adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

Executive Session

The State Human Resources Commission did not have an executive session at its April 1, 2021 meeting.

Minutes submitted by:

Denise H. Mazza,
State Human Resources Commission Administrator