

Hilo, Hawaii
Tuesday, July 19, 2005

The regular meeting of the Civil Service Commission, County of Hawaii, was held in the conference room of the Department of Civil Service, 101 Pauahi Street, Suite 2, Hilo, Hawaii, on Tuesday, July 19, 2005.

Present:

Ms. Jeanne E. Yagi, Chairperson
Mr. Clifford Kaminaka, Vice Chair
Ms. Kaliko Chun, Member
Mr. Joel Cohen, Member
Mr. Michael R. Ben, Director of Personnel
Mr. Rodney T. Kaido, Deputy Director of Personnel
Mr. Michael J. Udovic, Deputy Corporation Counsel
Ms. Sandra H. Hamano, Clerk III
Ms. Velma Y. Menezes, Secretary-Reporter

Chairperson Yagi called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 20, 2005

MOTION: Ms. Chun moved that the minutes of June 20, 2005 be approved as circulated. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kaminaka and unanimously carried.

ADDENDUM

A communication was received from Harry S. Kubojiri, Acting Police Chief, regarding the assignment of Captain Jay N. Enanoria to attend the hearing on the appeal filed by Mr. Jake P. San.

MOTION: Ms. Chun moved that the agenda be amended to add the above communication and that it be placed under Communications. The motion was

seconded by Mr. Kaminaka and unanimously carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication No. 05-10, dated July 6, 2005, from Harry S. Kubojiri, Acting Police Chief, regarding the assignment of Captain Jay N. Enanoria to attend the hearing on the appeal filed by Mr. Jake P. San.

MOTION: Mr. Kaminaka moved that Communication No. 05-10 be received and filed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cohen and unanimously carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Discuss results of annual evaluation survey with the Director of Personnel.

Chairperson Yagi stated that the Commissioners needed more time to complete the review of the survey forms that had been submitted.

The meeting recessed at 9:35 a.m. and reconvened at 10:19 a.m.

Chairperson Yagi reported that the Commission received 26 out of 48 surveys. Nine out of the 26 did not use the Commission's form, and one used it marginally. A good number refused to identify themselves and stated their reasons. Eleven did identify themselves. Nine out of the 26 gave Mr. Ben a very good evaluation. Twelve questioned certain things. There were some excellent suggestions. There were also questions raised about a departmental survey that was done within Civil Service as part of the department's strategic planning process.

Mr. Fernandez of Kauai County used a form that Chairperson Yagi thought was good, even though it appeared to be more of a

supervisory kind of form, with specific numbers assigned to specific qualities of rating.

Ms. Chun noted that from the comments received, it seemed that the majority had difficulty understanding the questions in the survey. She suggested that the Commission revise the form for the next evaluation to make it clearer and perhaps revise the questions so that they are not as general and are easier to answer.

Mr. Kaminaka agreed with Chairperson Yagi's statement regarding some problems with interpreting certain responses in the survey. He suggested adopting some of the items in Mr. Fernandez's form to improve theirs.

Mr. Cohen understood that it was the Commission's intention to not use up too much of people's time with the survey. He does not have a good picture of the different levels and the different departments that this information came from, and he believes it to be important. The Civil Service department is very critical to County operations, and he personally doesn't think spending twenty minutes in completing the questionnaire is too much to ask of a department head or the division chief. He believes that for the next evaluation, the Commission should require its completion be mandatory, which may require support from the Managing Director.

Ms. Chun agreed that revisions to the product would help. One of the respondents had wondered what the Commission's role was, and she believes it would help if the Commission clarified its role.

Chairperson Yagi commented that the one major thing they thought they would get, and which she doesn't believe they did, was an indication from the respondents on where they would like to see improvements on the way the department operates. Instead, all they really got, in some cases, were glory for some and criticisms of others rather than "can we do it this way better?" The only person that actually wrote a note down that said something specific and therefore constructive was Lincoln Ashida, who questioned quiet time and whether or not an officer could be

assigned to respond even during quiet time. Chairperson Yagi asked for an explanation of the procedure.

Mr. Ben explained that they didn't take phone calls during the original quiet time. The department went through several modifications, and now each division chief decides whether they are going to use it.

The original intent of quiet time was to reduce interruptions and the time it would take to get back to where you were in your work. The work Civil Service does are for other departments, so when there are interruptions from one department, that department is taking time away from another department. It's actually one customer versus another customer.

Chairperson Yagi asked whether there is an officer-of-the-day situation where somebody is assigned to answer the calls during quiet time that day.

Mr. Ben responded that staff previously just took messages. There were exceptions, such as the Mayor and Council. The time delay in getting back to callers is a couple of hours, and it's Mr. Ben's philosophy that there is no personnel issue that can't wait two hours. Civil Service has provided training on the topics departments call about, but they keep asking the same questions.

Mr. Ben has modified quiet time now to allow each division chief to decide for themselves whether they want to use it or not. Unfortunately, the way the department is set up now, if someone wants a classification answer, for example, only Joney Nitahara (the classification specialist) can give a classification answer, or perhaps Mr. Kaido.

Chairperson Yagi noted that there were also requests for training mentioned, but she has seen training schedules in the newsletter and in the report that is circulated each month, so she has interpreted that to mean that perhaps there are communication problems within the departments.

Mr. Ben confirmed that word wasn't getting down to the lower levels. The departments had been instructed to filter the information to their employees, and Civil Service has asked departments what they want Civil Service to do, but nothing has ever come back to Civil Service.

Chairperson Yagi stated that on one complaint in the survey, someone wrote that they have only one personnel person, whereas Civil Service has the whole department, so why can't they get an answer?

Mr. Cohen commented that basically the delegation of responsibility regarding human resources should go to the department because Civil Service shouldn't be responsible for everything. It starts with the first line supervisor and works its way to the department. He thinks that the fact that there hasn't been a lot of appeals is a good sign, or a couple things could be happening--either people are afraid to say or do anything, or things are being handled and done well. It's probably somewhere in the middle, like most places.

Mr. Cohen added that when he came on board he had asked for an organizational chart. He asked whether there have been any changes since then, and if Mr. Ben could clearly define the supervisory management responsibilities down to the specialist. He also asked if the specialists are at the supervisory level in traditional standards like evaluating the employees and so forth.

Mr. Ben explained that the department has the director, or department head, and managers. The department doesn't have any supervisors below the managers. Those divisions with one position are working managers. The Recruitment Division has one professional and one paraprofessional. The Employee Relations division has two paraprofessionals. Health and Safety has two professionals and two paraprofessionals. The professionals will evaluate those below them, but they don't supervise or evaluate the paraprofessionals.

Mr. Cohen commented that it sounds like the director is responsible for all the supervisory and management responsibilities.

Mr. Ben stated that the managers hire and terminate. They are responsible for their employees.

Chairperson Yagi stated that she had personally wanted the survey to give the Commission an idea of the department's progress, but it wasn't clear, and it was hard to tell because so many people didn't identify themselves. She doesn't know if the surveys were turned in by people who are department heads themselves. She was disappointed that they didn't get one back from the Managing Director or the Mayor. It would have been helpful to know what their perception is, but she realizes they are busy. She doesn't know that simply adopting the Kauai format is going to help them. Overall, the one area that she has difficulty with is that people who made those comments did not identify themselves, and she has a real tough time giving those comments any credibility if they refuse to identify themselves. That is the one area that she's very uncomfortable with. She had been taught her whole life that if you have a problem with something or someone, go to that person and discuss it with that person. It's obvious from these surveys that people want to see some things change, but she can't give it credence because she can't discuss it.

Mr. Ben asked whether there was a commonality between the comments from the anonymous returns.

Chairperson Yagi responded affirmatively.

Mr. Kaminaka stated that a lot of the responses were very subjective, and he had to put that on the side. When they first started this survey, he had wanted to keep the subjective comments to a minimum and look at it objectively. Those who were critical had fewer suggestions, or didn't give any suggestions. It was as if they were just blowing smoke. He reiterated that he had to put that on the side. However, he did put more weight on those that had suggestions and more so if they identified

themselves. A lot of the ones that were subjective had the same thing to say, and that's what concerns him.

Chairperson Yagi stated that it concerns her because she can't engage them in conversation. She can't say "what's the detail of correction here."

Mr. Kaminaka stated that if he were to say one word that he thinks they are all leading to, it's that Mr. Ben is unapproachable. Mr. Kaminaka, being a manager himself, knows that it's a lonely job; it's hard.

Ms. Chun stated that her thinking is how can they not be subjective if they are dealing with people, because the area of personnel is in dealing with relationships. She also found that some subjective responses would say something such as "Mr. Ben is very knowledgeable about rules and the field and how to handle negotiations, but he does not relate well to people; he's unapproachable; he does not communicate, and on and on. Some of these comments were the same things repeated by several people so the objective would be that this person knows his field but he cannot communicate.

Chairperson Yagi said that they can't say that, because they don't know who those people are.

Ms. Chun stated that she felt they were all likely to be anonymous because, as she had mentioned at their previous meeting, she was approached by people in two instances who said they should have an evaluation and that it should be anonymous. People who want to be identified will identify themselves whether they're given an option or not, and those who want to remain anonymous feel more comfortable that way. At least they got a response, and Mr. Kaminaka's remark that there were so many that were alike means to her that they cannot disregard this.

Chairperson Yagi explained that she's not saying they can disregard them, but it's not fair to take them into consideration if they cannot discuss it. With Mr. Ashida, she could talk to him and let him know that they made an adjustment in quiet time, but when

someone says something but does not say who they are, then they can't engage them.

Ms. Chun responded that she understands, but those that sent their responses had comments that were very alike. She also noted that while quiet time could be adjusted and Mr. Ashida be made aware of it, someone else might not like the adjustment that was made.

Chairperson Yagi stated that her question would be, then, how would Ms. Chun make the adjustment on the group of people who said things about Mr. Ben's manner? What would she do about that?

Mr. Kaminaka stated that he would like to answer that. A lot of people probably sent in anonymous responses because the survey wasn't meant for the Commission to go back and say "what do you mean by this, Lincoln?" It was never meant to go back to them or for the Commission to ask for more information on it. It was a one-shot deal and the respondents answered the best they could. They don't want the Commission to go back to them to ask them why or to have to justify their responses.

Chairperson Yagi stated that they are not asking them to justify or rationalize. In their original letter, they said that they are looking to evaluate in order to make improvements that were necessary. The bottom line in all of this is communication.

Mr. Kaminaka agreed and stated that they're learning that their communication on this needs to improve. The department heads need to be communicating better too. If the director of personnel needs to be improving his approachability, which Mr. Kaminaka never had a problem with, the bottom line is that conversation is an interaction; and he feels handicapped in interacting with information that is like "take it or leave it."

Ms. Chun noted that the form was, as Mr. Kaminaka said earlier, one shot.

Mr. Cohen commented that while Mr. Ben was absent from some meetings because he was in Honolulu negotiating State contracts, he had responsibilities here at the same time. It appears that at the State level, they think of Mr. Ben as the "greatest thing since whatever," and on the other hand they've had more negative comments than they would have liked from people responding internally. Mr. Cohen asked whether Mr. Ben is in a difficult position when he is trying to be the person doing State contracts and the day-to-day work.

Mr. Ben responded that he doesn't feel he's in a difficult position. He agreed that he is unapproachable and understands the comments. He sensed the Commission's difficulty in figuring out why those comments were coming in. His understanding is that the questionnaire went out to the department heads and anybody else they wanted to assign it to or filter it down to.

Ms. Menezes stated that the letter that accompanied the survey was addressed it to each department head because it was the Commission's feeling that the department head can do whatever they want with it.

Mr. Ben stated that his philosophy as a Director is that he's working at a high level. He shouldn't be working with the personnel clerks and others in the department. Civil Service is a very specialized function. He has managers who specialize in their areas so these clerks shouldn't be calling him and asking him what to do about things. That's not his level, but he does initially take those calls. When those calls keep coming from the same people over and over, those are the people he comes back at, although it's not fair for him to address this now because it's not known where those responses came from. Nevertheless, that's why he asked about the commonality and whether it's coming from several different areas.

Mr. Ben reiterated that his philosophy is that he doesn't deal with the day-to-day classification and recruitment issues or questions such as "is this job opening, where's this job." That's not Mr. Ben's job, but those are the kinds of questions he gets.

Chairperson Yagi agreed that it's not his job. She stated that delegating is – setting the course, delegating, and representing the County. It was obvious from the comments that that's being done.

Mr. Ben stated that it shouldn't even be at Mr. Kaido's level, but he had told Mr. Kaido several years ago to run the department (day-to-day issues). Mr. Ben's job is involved in the issues that require changes.

Mr. Cohen stated that he has one more question that he's harboring on this organizational thing because there was an issue regarding supervisory management. There were some comments that there wasn't adequate supervisory, leadership type of training and people in the departments were not at the skill level required to do their job. Mr. Cohen asked Mr. Ben to respond to that.

Mr. Ben informed the Commission that when he got his training specialist in 2000, she went to the departments to do surveys. As part of all the departments' strategic planning process, this issue (of leadership training) was identified, so the trainer worked and in fact delivered many supervisory courses on leadership training, specifically, as he recalls, for Fire and Parks, but there were also other courses that were opened up to everybody. They were providing training extensively in all areas. Supervisory skills was one of the main ones identified in the survey. If the Commission reviews the department's records, it will find that they delivered on that. Even at present, with Tom Linker on board, they're identifying specific training for employees that they can do online so that the comment of "I don't have the time" will not be an issue, as training will be available at any time.

MOTION: Mr. Cohen moved that the Commission summarize the suggestions that have been made on the surveys, transmit that information to Mr. Ben, and request a response from him for discussion purposes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kaminaka and unanimously carried.

Chairperson Yagi asked Mr. Udovic whether, when the Commission sits down to summarize, it has to be on record.

Mr. Udovic responded that the Commission would be summarizing for information purposes, and that would become part of the record once the summary is brought to the meeting. It would be agreeable as long as the Commission doesn't come to any agreements or conclusions as a result of that. As a matter of protocol, two Commissioners can meet without there being any issues as long as the two Commissioners don't discuss new business and come to any conclusions or agreements. Because this is a working meeting to provide information for the general public's consumption and for Mr. Ben, Mr. Udovic stated that he would have to research the rules on that.

Mr. Cohen brought up emailing, which Mr. Udovic stated he believes is possible.

Chairperson Yagi asked if she could do a draft herself and bring it to the next meeting. Mr. Udovic responded affirmatively. The information can be shared as long as the members don't make agreements about anything.

Chairperson Yagi stated that they will keep this item under Unfinished Business for the next meeting.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Ben reported the following

- 1) The contract administration meeting that he re-instituted went very well.**
- 2) Ms. Marie Laderta, who is currently the deputy director of tax, will become the new director of the Department of Human Resources Development on August 1.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cohen announced that there will be a meeting in Honokaa tomorrow night on the coqui frog problem.

Chairperson Yagi asked Mr. Udovic about the status of new commissioners for the Commission.

Mr. Udovic responded that Mr. Ashida is still working on it.

Chairperson Yagi noted that she will not be able to make the Commission's September 20 meeting and hearing; however, there should be a quorum.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Commission's next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 16, 2005, at 9:30 a.m., followed by Mr. Peter Boucher's appeal hearing at 10:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Submitted by,

Secretary, Civil Service Commission

APPROVED:

**Jeanne E. Yagi
Chairperson**

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