



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

4:00 pm

Full Meeting Minutes

Teleconference

### Attendees

Steve Bagwin	Chairman, WPCA Board Member
Ed Kelly	WPCA Board Member
Merritt Nesin	WPCA Board Member
William Brink	Executive Director, WPCA
Rhudean Bull	Administration Manager, WPCA

### Call to Order and Roll Call

S. Bagwin called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. There were three (3) Committee / Board members present.

### Minutes Approval: March 14, 2024, Workforce Development Committee Meeting

E. Kelly made a motion to approve the March 14, 2024, WFD committee meeting minutes; seconded by S. Bagwin. There was no further discussion. **Vote 2-0-0.** M. Nesin did not vote.

### Discussion: Position Vacancies

R. Bull affirmed the ongoing vacancy for the Assist Plant Supervisor role, indicating that details regarding funding and recruitment strategies would be outlined in the "Strategies for Filling Position". Furthermore, she noted that the vacant Shift Foreman position had been downgraded temporarily to facilitate the rehiring of a departed Operator II. She stated that funding for the position is secured for a portion of the FY '25 budget, with full funding by November of the new fiscal year.

Concerning the vacancy for Maintenance TradesWorker II–Electrician, R. Bull provided updates, mentioning revisions to the job description and a title change to Wastewater Treatment Electrician – WPCA. She explained that due to substantial changes, the H.R. Department requested the position be reviewed by the Personnel Commission. She explained that the creation of a new classification for Wastewater Treatment Electrician will be sought by the WPCA, replacing one position of Maintenance Tradesworker II—Electrician.

R. Bull reported that for the Plant Supervisor position, B. Brink had made changes to the job description, and it must go to the Personnel Commission for the changes to be seen, reviewed and noted. E. Kelly questioned if R. Pudelka had left, to which R. Bull responded that his last official day was March 29<sup>th</sup> but his last day at the Plant was Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. S. Bagwin asked if there was an Exit Interview, to which R. Bull responded that the HR Director was aware of the Plant Supervisor's departure and was to conduct the interview. She stated that R. Frager reached out to R. Pudelka to schedule the interview, but he did not respond; she did not believe an actual interview occurred.

B. Brink questioned if HR agreed to upgrade the position, to which R. Bull replied that HR had concerns that an upgrade could cause issues, but that an upgrade is not out of the realm of possibilities after the job description changes are approved.

M. Nesin was able to be heard saying that he had an issue with his mute status on Zoom. He insisted that he would not approve the minutes until R. Bull ensured that all topics from the previous meeting were accurately

reflected, with no omissions. He expressed concern over R. Pudelka's sudden departure and said he believes that information is being withheld. He stated that as a representative of Stanford, appointed by the Mayor and deeply involved in R. Pudelka's hiring process, he deserves transparency. He further stated that he offered to write R. Pudelka a letter of recommendation, considering him a valuable employee. He stressed the importance of clarity and wanted to know if misconduct was involved, saying he would like to know before proceeding. He suggested the possibility of convening an executive session, but refused to adjourn the meeting until he had a clear understanding of the situation.

E. Kelly stated that he reviewed the minutes and attended the meeting, and believes they accurately captured the discussions from the last meeting. He further stated that he felt confident in their reflection of the proceedings and that he wanted to acknowledge the commendable job the committee is doing.

He explained that he also tried to reach out to R. Pudelka. He said that he was unable to reach him by phone but did leave a message expressing his regret over his decision to leave and the desire to understand his reasons. He stated R. Pudelka eventually responded with a note, providing some insights into his departure. E. Kelly stated that while he is willing to share these details, he believes it would be best done in an Executive Session due to their sensitive nature.

R. Bull stated that since an "Executive Session" was not included on the agenda the committee may not be able to convene such a session at this time. She explained that executive sessions typically require prior notice, an explanation of the purpose, and the opportunity for the individual(s) involved to participate if desired, especially when discussing personnel matters. She went on to say that given these constraints, the committee should carefully consider the next steps and how best to proceed with sharing the information provided by R. Pudelka without violating any procedural requirements or confidentiality concerns.

The Chairman, S. Bagwin, stated the committee should proceed with the agenda.

#### **Discussion: Strategies for Filling Positions**

R. Bull reported that the WPCA has a clear strategy in mind regarding the vacant positions. She spoke about the Assist. Plant Supervisor and the Shift Foreman saying that the WPCA will recruit for these positions beginning January 2025. She explained that for the Plant Supervisor and newly created Wastewater Treatment Electrician positions, once the job postings are live, the WPCA will distribute them to all wastewater treatment facilities across Connecticut. She stated the WPCA will also advertise in various wastewater treatment periodicals and on the websites of several relevant organizations, primarily focusing on wastewater treatment-based platforms like CT NEWA. She explained that this approach applies not only to the plant supervisor role but also to the electrician position.

#### **IUOE Contract Settlement Retro Payout**

R. Bull reported that the Union filed a grievance as well as a complaint with the State Labor Board in an effort to resolve the long-standing matter of correcting the IUOE retro payout. She explained that the active employees and the retirees have been paid incorrectly. She mentioned that she supplied documentation to the Labor Relations Specialist to show the WPCA's effort to meet with and assist Payroll in correcting the matter.

#### **Update: WPCA Staff COVID19 Cases**

R. Bull reported there has been no new COVID case since the March meeting.

#### **Note:**

There was a brief discussion as to whether to hold the executive session discussion at the full Board meeting the following Monday. E. Kelly stated that since B. Brink will not be at the meeting, it would be better to schedule an executive session for next month's agenda in a prudent step to ensure the committee can address sensitive matters appropriately. He went on to say that M. Nesin's reflection on the cultural environment and management dynamics and its relationship to the larger organization is insightful and that certainly, revisiting discussions on the environment and culture the committee aims to foster are valuable. He further stated that it is evident that creating a respectful and supportive workplace is essential for collective success, particularly when collaborating with

various city departments. He also stated that reflecting on past challenges and identifying any existing cultural or structural deficiencies can guide the WPCA in implementing necessary improvements.

He concluded by saying that exploring the reasons behind R. Pudelka's departure in more detail could provide valuable insights into any underlying issues that need to be addressed and that this deeper understanding can help identify areas for improvement, ensuring that the committee can help continue to cultivate a positive and inclusive environment for all WPCA employees.

**Old Business**

No old business

**New Business**

No new business.

**Adjournment**

S. Bagwin made a motion to adjourn the April 10, 2024, Workforce Development committee meeting at 4:27 pm; seconded by E. Kelly. There was no further discussion. **Vote: 3-0-0.**