

CITY OF WAUWATOSA

MEMORIAL CIVIC CENTER
7725 WEST NORTH AVENUE
Telephone: (414) 479-8917
Fax: (414) 479-8989

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, September 28, 2004
Council Chambers

PRESENT: Aids. Bruderle-Baran, Casey, Kopischke, Stepaniak – 4

EXCUSED: Ald. Jenkins

ALSO PRESENT: B. Aldana, Asst. City Atty., N. Kreuser, Health Officer; M. Mulroy, Library Dir.; E. Steinke, Sec., City Clerk; M. Steffey, Preparedness Coor. Asst., Health

Ald. Casey as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Health insurance coverage for Milwaukee/Waukesha County Emergency Preparedness Consortium grant funded positions

Ms. Aldana said there are currently two bioterrorism positions, one professional and one clerical. There is also one proposed epidemiologist position. These positions are funded either entirely or partially by the bioterrorism consortium. She said the personnel department and the health department are seeking approval from the Common Council regarding whether and under what conditions these consortium grant funded positions should be eligible for city paid health insurance. The cost of the wages and the city's standard fringe benefit package is paid entirely by consortium funds. The question before the Council is whether consortium funded employees should be on the city's self-funded health insurance plan. She said having these employees on the self-funded plan vs. the HMO means the city can easily apportion the cost of providing health insurance to the consortium for employees on the HMO. In that case, the entire risk to the city is reflected in and compensated for in the 53% of wages that is charged for fringe benefits to the consortium.

She said that regardless of claims made by an employee, under the city's current indemnity HMO plan, the cost to the city remains the premium. If these employees take what is called the MBA plan which is self-funded or if the city eventually self-funds an HMO-like plan, the cost to the city is dollar for dollar for all claims made on the plan. According to the current funding arrangement with the consortium, the city would not be reimbursed by the consortium for the actual cost of the claims. She stressed that the employees in these positions are currently either choosing the HMO or not taking city insurance at all. There is no guarantee that this will always be the case. She recommended that the city offer the self-funded plan to employees in the consortium grant funded positions. Although the city still accepts more risk than other members of the consortium, it does receive 53% of wages for the fringe benefit package for these employees. The 53% includes the ghost rate for insurance premiums on the self-funded plan, which is an actuarial attempt to estimate the cost to the city for all employees.

Ald. Kopischke said he didn't think this issue had been discussed before. He asked if the whole pool of employees is considered in the ghost rate. Ms. Aldana responded that all plan participants are included. Ald. Kopischke said it made sense to allow the same health benefits structure for the consortium employees as for any other employee.

Dr. Kreuser said the first bioterrorism coordinator was put in the health insurance pool. The second coordinator declined the health insurance. They would like the clerical position to go to full time in the future. At that time the person in that position might opt for the self-insured plan. Ald. Bruderle-Baran asked if there was any problem with offering only the HMO plan. Ms. Aldana responded that the ghost rate or actuarial analysis equals the same amount of risk as accepted with any other employee, but in this case, the duties serve the consortium.

Ms. Aldana added that the HMO is not self-funded and its future is questionable. Ald. Bruderle-Baran expressed concern that the city is offering to provide the employees working for the consortium with city health insurance, when these people technically work for the consortium.

Ald. Stepaniak said that with five lasered individuals already enrolled in the city's health insurance plan, there is tremendous financial exposure to the city. He noted that the employees for the consortium have the potential to develop significant health issues. If the health insurance is extended to these employees and the next month one of them develops a serious health problem, the city will have to pay out of pocket for the costs incurred. The HMO option spreads the risk. He said that at this time he would not have a problem with only offering the HMO plan. He said he was more concerned with the major risk and the fact that the city would be putting itself in an exposure position.

Ms. Aldana noted that if the city does not offer health insurance to the consortium employees, it could impact on the city's fiscal agent status. Another issue to take into consideration is that the clerical position is represented and authorized to be from part time up to full time. Once the position goes to full time, the city will be required to offer health insurance.

Ald. Stepaniak said one of the unusual aspects of this issue is that technically the clerical person is a non-city employee in a bargaining unit of the city. Ms. Aldana said she didn't know if, from a legal standpoint, the city can say that an employee funded by an outside source is not part of the bargaining unit. The situation was set up some time ago before she became personnel administrator. Ald. Stepaniak said he would like to see some study on this complicated arrangement in order to address any concerns.

Ald. Casey asked if the consortium could be charged for more than the 53% in benefits. Ms. Aldana said that would require more negotiations. Ald. Casey said he didn't have any problem with obtaining reimbursement from the consortium; however, he was concerned that an employee funded by an outside source was being treated like a city employee.

Ald. Kopischke said his initial thinking was that as a fairness issue, the employees hired for the consortium should be treated comparably to city employees. He thought the best option would be to ask for cost reimbursement from the consortium. Ms. Aldana cautioned that it was Dr. Kreuser's opinion that the consortium could not reimburse a catastrophic claim. She said the committee could move ahead with a decision on the epidemiologist position on the agenda for now and give more time for further information on the health insurance questions. Ald. Bruderle-Baran asked for a legal opinion on the status of the represented employee and whether the city can limit its health insurance offering to only one plan.

It was the consensus of the committee to hold this item for more information from the Assistant City Attorney.

Addition of a part time (up to full time) consortium epidemiologist position to support programs for the Milwaukee/Waukesha County Consortium for Emergency Preparedness

Dr. Kreuser said they have an identified need in the department for the epidemiologist position. The previous coordinator was an epidemiologist by background. The current coordinator has a health education background. The city is in the midst of a Pertussis epidemic. An epidemiologist would strengthen the capacity of the consortium to address the complex data collection, analysis, trending, and reporting requirements for the geographic area that holds 1.3 million people in two adjoining counties. She said that other health departments in the consortium already have epidemiologists to help manage data.

Moved by Ald. Bruderle-Baran, seconded by Ald. Stepaniak to recommend approval for a part time (less than 40 hours) epidemiologist in the health department --

Dr. Kreuser said that although the epidemiologist would be part time to serve the consortium initially, she would be looking at the position becoming half consortium and half city employee. This would raise the question of offering health insurance. The original coordinator was offered HMO coverage only.

Vote on the motion Ayes: 4

Position reclassifications for employees in the library and city clerk's office

Ms. Aldana said these two clerical positions are represented by local 35. The person in the secretary III position in the city clerk's office took over the city's web site management. Originally web site management was done by the Assistant to the Administrator; however, that position has been changed to an intern position with a high potential for turnover. The management of the web site needs to be done by a position that has more stability. She said that secretary III is the highest level position under the contract. The position would be reclassified to secretary/web site coordinator with a pay range similar to that of a computer operator I.

Ms Aldana said the person in the municipal clerk I position in the library has been performing higher level duties for some time. This position would be changed to municipal clerk II.

Ms. Ledesma said that the person doing web site coordination in the city clerk's office has been the sole resource for people that work on the web site. This person performs a lot of the maintenance and background work that is not readily apparent to the casual user. This is the person that web site content managers contact for help. When the network crashed, this person worked on restoring all the passwords. This is a highly self directed position. Ms. Ledesma asked that this person receive more of a raise than the contract provisions call for as an acknowledgement of what she has done and the fact that she has taken on duties that were not originally part of her job description. She said that stability in this position is more cost effective than constant training because of turnover.

Ms. Mulroy said the person in the municipal clerk I position has been the acting volunteer coordinator for approximately one year. This person screens the volunteers, creates the training schedule, and coordinates the volunteer luncheon. These activities are very important to the volunteers. Ms. Mulroy said she would like to give recognition for the work this person does for the city.

Ald. Stepaniak said he was sensitive to the need for reclassification in both these positions. He expressed slight concern that having a number of reclassifications would put the city into a precedental situation with other people in the same positions.

Moved by Ald. Stepaniak, seconded by Ald. Kopischke to recommend the reclassifications in the city clerk's office and the library contingent upon obtaining a non-precedental agreement from the respective unions --

Ms. Aldana added that the effective date for these changes is different for each position. The city clerk's office position would be effective immediately. The library position would be effective beginning in 2005.

Vote on the motion was Ayes: 4

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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