

Court Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes
August 29, 2012
4:00 p.m.

Library at the Office of the Probate Court Administrator
186 Newington Road, West Hartford, CT

The meeting was convened at 5:04 p.m.

In attendance: Judge Paul J. Knierim, Probate Court Administrator and Chair, Judge Joseph Marino and Judge Fred Anthony

Public Comment and Correspondence

The following individual offered comments:

Mary MacGregor, Vice President of CAPC and Chief Clerk of the Glastonbury-Hebron Probate Court

Pat Saviano, President of CAPC and Chief Clerk of the Danbury Probate Court

Judge Sydney W. Elkin of the West Hartford Probate Court

The committee received the following correspondence:

Letter from Judge Steven M. Zelman, Administrative Judge of the HRCPC

Letter from Judge Martin F. Landgrebe of the Housatonic Probate Court

Letter from Judge Jennifer L. Berkenstock of the Region 14 Probate Court

Status of Performance Evaluation System

Attorney Bonnie Bennet updated the committee on the project to implement a system-wide performance evaluation system for court staff. The system will also serve as the basis for planned merit compensation increases.

MAG has prepared specific performance criteria for each position and is in the process of developing the software that will run the web-based performance evaluation system. The committee reviewed a paper mock-up of the evaluation form for each position as it will appear in the computer program.

The committee discussed the timeline for implementation of the system. The first evaluation period will run from October 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013, after which evaluations will be done on an annual basis. The paper mock-ups of the performance evaluation system will be distributed during September to judges and clerks so that all

...ia on which their evaluations will be based. The ... in January 2013 and judges will have a May 31, 2013 deadline to complete evaluations for the initial six month period. The system will calculate merit increases based upon the performance evaluations. Merit increases are planned for July 2013, subject to budget approval.

Reference should be made to the minutes of the May 16, 2012 meeting for additional information about the performance evaluation system.

Internal Pay Equity Study

Carolyn Long of MAG participated by phone to discuss the internal pay equity study. She reiterated that the purpose of the study is to rectify pay disparities among employees related to length of service.

MAG recommends that pay adjustments be calculated primarily on the basis of the date on which each employee was promoted to his or her current position. Ms. Long emphasized that promotion date is the typical criterion used when organizations seek to rectify pay disparities related to length of service. For the Probate Court system, MAG recommends an additional benefit equal to 10% of the employee's service prior to being promoted to the current position. Ms. Long characterized the prior service credit as generous. While prior service credit is rarely used, it is nonetheless appropriate for the Probate Courts given the recent transition from a decentralized system to one in which positions and pay ranges are uniform among all courts. The study calculates pay adjustments as of January 5, 2011, the date on which the system-wide pay structure went into effect.

Using this method, a target salary is determined for each employee by the following method. The daily increase is calculated for each position by dividing the difference between the maximum and minimum pay rates for the position by the number of days in a 20 year career progression ($20 \times 365 = 7,300$). The employee is credited a daily increase from the minimum for the employee's current position for each day of service in that position through January 5, 2011. An additional daily increase is credited for each ten days of service in a prior position. The target pay rate is then compared to the employee's current pay rate. If the employee's current pay rate is lower than the target, an adjustment would be made. The pay of an employee whose current pay rate is more than the target would not be reduced.

The following example illustrates the target salary calculation:

A	Hire date / Position	January 5, 1990 / Assistant Clerk
B	Promotion date / Current position	January 5, 2000 / Deputy Chief Clerk
C	Days in current position (January 5, 2000 to January 5, 2011)	4,015

		in prior	365
E	Total service credit (C+D)		4,380
F	Experience credit date (promotion date adjusted to reflect additional prior service credit)		January 5, 1999
G	Daily increase amount (Difference between minimum and maximum for the position divided by 7,300 days)		\$0.0011288
H	Total adjustment (E x G)		4.94
I	Target (minimum plus H)		25.55
J	Current wage		20.61
K	Adjustment wage (greater of I and J)		25.55

If the employee in the above example works 37.5 hours per week, the \$4.94 increase in hourly rate would translate to a \$9,633 annual salary increase.

Of the 248 employees included in the study (which excludes temps, retirees and employees hired on or after January 1, 2011), 115 individuals are currently below their target pay rate. The cost to implement the equity adjustments is approximately \$400,000 per year.

The committee expressed support for the overall study design. To assist the committee in evaluating the proposal, MAG will provide committee members with examples showing the impact for several individual employees, using employee numbers rather than names to maintain anonymity. In addition, MAG will determine the number of employees affected by the proposed credit for prior service.

Once the formula is finalized, MAG will prepare a report detailing the target salaries and proposed pay adjustments for all employees. The report will list employees by employee number to maintain anonymity. The report will be distributed to all judges and employees prior to the November budget committee meeting to provide an opportunity for review and comment before adoption of a final plan.

Reference should be made to the minutes of the May 16, 2012 meeting for additional information about the study methodology.

Consideration of Proposed Staffing Level Adjustments

The New Haven Probate Court requests an increase in benchmark staffing level for the Chief Clerk III position from 0.7 to 0.9 FTE. The purpose of the proposed adjustment is to make the Chief Clerk position full-time at 37.5 hours per week.

requests an increase for the Chief Clerk I position from 0.8 FTE to 1.0 FTE, which increases would be offset by a 0.2 FTE reduction for the Assistant Clerk position. The purpose of the proposed adjustment is to make the Chief Clerk and Clerk positions full-time at 40 hours per week.

Judge Anthony moved to approve both adjustments. Judge Marino seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Flexible Spending Accounts

Andrea King, Director of Financial Services, informed the committee of her findings regarding the cost and feasibility of adding Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) to the employee benefits available to judges and court staff. She explained that FSAs are a mechanism by which employees can save on income taxes. Employees who wish to participate can elect to have a portion of their pay deferred into an FSA, which can in turn be used to pay dependent care expenses and certain medical expenses that are not covered by health insurance. Participation is optional and there is no cost to the employee.

The annual cost to the system to provide an FSA benefit would be approximately \$6,000. Paychex is able to administer the FSA program through the existing payroll system.

Judge Anthony moved to authorize PCA to enter into a contract with Paychex to administer an FSA benefit for judges and court employees. Judge Marino seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

NCPJ Dues

Judge Anthony and PCA are coordinating the enrollment of judges who wish to be active participants in NCPJ with the goal of obtaining an overall reduction in the dues. PCA will pay a single invoice on behalf of all participating judges.

Vacation Leave vs. Sick Leave

Judge Knierim indicated that PCA is aware of situations in which court employees have expressed confusion whether sick time may be treated as equivalent to vacation days, despite language in the sick time policy that specifies the allowable uses of sick leave. Committee members agreed that the sick and vacation policies should be amended to explicitly prohibit the use of sick time as a substitute or supplement to vacation time.

Transition from Temporary Employment into Permanent Employment

Judge Knierim recommended that language be added to Policy 202 to make it clear that vacation accruals for a temporary employee who is hired into a regular position are calculated on the basis of the date when the individual becomes a regular employee. Committee members agreed that the clarification should be made.



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The committee's next meeting will be on November 7, 2012 at 5:00 PM.

Executive Session

The committee went into executive session at 6:35 p.m. to review the recommendations of probate administration concerning promotion dates for individual employees whose employment histories require interpretation.

The committee resumed the open session of the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Judge Knierim moved to adopt the recommendation of probate administration to establish January 5, 2011 as the promotion date for James Felice of the West Hartford Probate Court to the position of clerk. Judge Marino seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for the vote. Judges Knierim and Marino voted yes. Judge Anthony voted no. The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.