IBBT Meeting

July 11, 2022-HR Training Room

3:00pm-5:00pm

In Attendance:

Facilitator: Laura Graetz

Note Taker: Lindsay Lowery

CWA Representatives: Jenn Powell, Russ Stiriz, Donald Welch, Robert Arnold and Robby Matheny

Management Representatives: Phil Mann, Steve Varvel, Cheryl McBride and Brett Goodman

Observer: Pam Harris-Barber

Agenda:

- **Temporary Reassignments**
- **Election Leave**
- **Field Services Staffing and Overtime**
- **CWA specific Grievance Forms**

Discussion

LG There are 4 items on the agenda. A couple of them brought by the Union and a couple brought by Management. The first item is around Temporary Reassignment. We discussed at the Management meeting that there is some language that we would like to adjust. Election leave is another item. The commission has approved this leave as you all may be aware. The commission approved for 2 hours to be provided to employees to leave for voting. Scott is meeting with each Union President to discuss this. We will pass the language around so you all can take a look at it.

RS I have a language question. Gainesville Primary and Gainesville City elections? How is the Ordinance? As a run off?

SV I think it is a run off in November.

RS That is my only concern.

CM We want to change to mirror what is in our Ordinance?

RS It depends on what the intension of the Commission is.

LG My understanding at the meeting, it was for all elections, all City elections.

SV If it's okay with you, changing general elections to City or runoff elections. I think that's consistent with what the Commission was wanting to do.

CM It sounds like we need to get clarification on this and bring it back to the next meeting or email it.

PM Aren't we on a timeline with this?

SV It does say whichever occurs later. We may not have it in August, but we would in November.

LG We can go back and get clarification on the language. Are you immutable to clarifying the language and communicating that in an email?

RA Yes, an email would be fine.

CM I think there may be an issue with ratifying this before August.

RS When we ratified the current agreement, this wasn't on the horizon. This doesn't fall under an MOU?

SV No.

CM You would use an MOU for any changes to be made prior to the next ratification if those changes were unforeseen, Unforeseen, then yes.

SV They want us to do it, I'd like to do it as easy as possible.

CM Isn't the easier way an MOU?

SV I suppose you don't want to receive an unfair labor practice over this?

RS The only other question, is the contract is closed. Do we need a specific document to open the contract?

SV Would that make you feel better? If we do an MOU, then we don't have to do a reopener. Would you guys mind opening Article 24? Then we will document that we did so in writing?

RA That's fine. It is an incentive for us.

LG We will clarify the language based on the Ordinance. Then we will check with Michelle to see if we can do an MOU. Temporary reassignments. It was brought to our attention that we need to clarify temporary reassignments. An MOU has been drafted to clarify this. We can read through it and discuss.

CM The gist of with temporary reassignments. If someone is reassigned to a higher pay, a 5% increase is given while they are acting out of class or if they are at the bottom of the pay range. What happens is the assignment is a lateral move? That's not in the Labor Agreement. Or what happens if the acting assignment is in the lower pay grade? We want to clarify what happens in the same pay grade. If acting is lower, there is no pay change. They would be doing different work, same work or lower value. But their pay would stay the same. On the whereas is..

RA On lateral assignment, raises come up. Would you give the raise on the higher pay?

CM Yes. Your pay increase is based on the regular job, not on the acting job. On the third whereas is, temp reassignment. A job class of lower pay grade. The current one does not address it. The 4th does not address the reassignment as the same. They are backwards. We want to clarify, if the same or lower then there is not change.

RS The word reassignment is not found in the contract. Temp reassignment. The “re” has to come off all of those to line up with the contract.

CM Out of class assignment is what these are referred to as. Steve suggests we clean them up and then email them out. Let’s go through and see if we need to clean up anything else.

SV They will not get a pay decrease.

CM I think the questions is, if the person requests it, has the Department Head assigned it? If it’s a higher pay grade, then they get the 5% or bottom of the range. If it’s lower or the bottom, then no change. Assigned or requested is what I think we are trying to accomplish.

RM What with requesting? There was an employee who had to change and even take a pay cut because of outside reasons. He needed to do the day shift instead of the night shift.

CM I think that is change, not a reassignment. If a person needs to be on day shift, do they take a lowery pay? I don’t think we want to write something that supersedes that.

SV What was available was a lower classification.

CM We need to make sure that’s in the language. I think we need to think that through. If a person wants to temporarily take a lower job class and they are willing to take less money. If the Department Head says okay but you have to take less money, how do we do that?

RM It’s only happened once that I know of.

BG Wouldn’t that be a voluntary demotion?

RA What are we looking to accomplish?

CM We have some new managers. When person is chosen for an acting assignment, there is a request to pay more, but it’s the same pay. They are saying the contract doesn’t say that. We just want to clarify it.

RS the only thing you have is transferred from no change. 34 B. If you compete in the same class, no bump up or no bump down, you stay the same.

CM Out of class assignments. It’s handled that same way. I wonder what we could do, on those cases with the lower level ones. If an employee requests and management agrees, there may be a reduction in pay. Add a sentence?

RS What about clarifying 35 B? Where it says transferred permanent or temporary assignment. Maybe clarify 34.5? Permanent or acting basis?

CM We are starting to see some direct appointments. Both management and employees want the acting out of class situation. So there may not be a competitive process. We haven’t seen this previously. We have new management where we are seeing it a little more often.

RM I wouldn’t think that would be encouraged.

CM HR wouldn’t recommend that as best practice.

SV It is where you have employment churn. It's an issue with how do I get the word done in the lower classification.

CM You have one person in a job, but that one person is the only one who does it. That person leaves, so rather than going through the competitive process, you say let's just put that person in there. It's a lateral move, but management wants to give that person more money. But it is the same pay grade. How do you pick and choose? Same pay grade, they should stay at the same pay grade. That's what we are trying to accomplish. I see 34.5 for permanent changes and Article 15.10 for temporary changes. We are trying to address the temporary changes that might occur through the competitive process, direct appoint or an employee's request. I think we need to do more work on this and bring it back to the Union. Do you all see anything else that pops up that we need to include?

RA Are you seeing this more on the lower or upper levels?

CM Both.

RA Is this tied in our retention problem? I am getting people in those situations and they are still doing some work in their original position too.

CM They should be using special assignment. That should be defined as that.

RA One thing I'm bringing in might circle into this, overtime. The issues we are having is in field services. That is why I brought Jenn alone. There seems to be a lot of turnover. Temps are coming in, but there is no clear path of how long they will be temps.

JP They are working mandatory overtime and Saturdays. January 2021, they were told they wouldn't have jobs and that they should start looking. They did. There are 11 or 12 left, and they use to have 28 or 29. Yes, they are compensated with overtime, but with no work/life balance, with no end in sight. There is no one who can tell us. They are working with temps who are not properly trained, we are burning out people who know how to do the job. They do know eventually it will come to an end, but we are losing good people. Just mandatory overtime, will not keep them around.

RA This is adding to the issue. Everyone is running and filling those holes. They want us to be sure, that they are not perceived as whiners, but these schedules are erratic.

JP They are given 7 days' notice about working on Saturdays. But they may have kids or plans, they are scared of retaliation.

SV They are working 6 days a week?

JP Yes they have been. They weren't notified 7 days in advance this past Saturday, so they didn't. But they start back up this Saturday.

RA We are here to say, what is the plan?

CM Yes, we are aware of this problem. I am curious to hear what ideas you have. I agree, mandatory overtime with no end in sight is not ideal. I am open to hearing you. I've made a couple of suggestions to the management team.

RA The easiest, would be to get more staff. I'm sure overtime, but you don't like seeing that cost.

JP As a new person, we wouldn't have such a turn over with temps if they had a path to becoming full time, or just a path.

RA We have to figure out will money make them stick, or real time?

JP I was calling people who left and asking why? They were getting burned out, they couldn't do it. There is a 3 days grace period, they are on the max every time. People are getting upset. People are assuming their meters have been misread.

PM If a meter is read right, it will take a jump now because of the increase in fuel charge.

SV Billing cycles are being extended because they are being read later.

RA I get that you can't find people.

PM So we bring these people in, we brought these temps in when Gary was still on the IBB. If we bring them in and make them permanent and they don't have anywhere to transfer, they get laid off?

JP The number of people we have at the higher level who are getting ready to retire, the number of people we are talking about, there is going to be advancement. There will be that stepping stone.

RA They don't have a path of how long the AMI project is going to go?

PM If I take a temp job and someone offers permanent benefits, then bye.

JP There are 68 people who could turn in and leave.

CM As you look at that Jenn, I don't know if you are looking at people with 20 years?

JP I looked at people with 20 years and above.

CM We'd look at age with that. There are some younger ones who may want to work longer. We don't want to lay off people when AMI comes online. We are looking at what we can do.

RM I'm hearing there is a lack of communication on this. Maybe have a discussion every few months. Then they can start training, it would let people prepare. The unknown loses a lot of people.

PM I remember that being the thought when we had that discussion the last time. I come in as a meter reader and get trained, but then I can jump off. What is the sweet spot?

CM With fewer employees, we will have all of the meters installed, or will it take longer? When we do start getting close, we will start looking at setting up vacancies for them to qualify for. A plan to help all of those folks to be places somewhere else.

RA A way to stop the massive overtime? That would be the first step. We network, we picked up all of our parts guys from temps. When they went to compete, the managers knew who they were.

PM I've been dealing with Malisa and Transit operators, we are doing mandatory overtime. We are 50 operators short. We are wearing them out.

CM Do you raise the rate of temps so you can hire more? What is the sweet spot? Then you have meter readers who aren't getting a raise?

JP Bring in more people who are invited with staying. I don't think it's offering them more money, it's the hours.

CM If we hire more regulars with benefits, with potential they will be placed somewhere else in the organization. That would help?

RA Yes, in your position you have the way to do that. I am trying to arrest the turnover and burnout. You can do that without raising the pay, but bringing in more temps. They can apply to other jobs.

JP They've been told, but then they need them here.

PM Do you have applicants?

CM We may be able to. If we change the staffing to start hiring more regulars with benefits. We had backed off, because we didn't want to lay them off. Now we've seen this challenge. If we change the staffing strategy. Knowing and planning that, we can place them and not have to lay off. We have folks who are currently temps who could do that.

PH-B The temp pool is very slim. I met with Nicole and they barely have any.

SV I don't know about just hiring more temps, since they are not here. I have a general implementation question. Are you all, when you do meter exchange all in an area at the same time? A natural progression as we take people off? We could do the cascading of them off.

RM They talked about that in the beginning. Is it when they come online, or as a big group?

BG A receiver in a neighborhood and all the meters are changes, then it does.

CM If we can't place those meter readers, then part of the plan is to try and find them jobs in the organization. A staffing plan that happens over time.

SV As more folks are on the AMI system, then that's when you would start taking them out.

BG In terms of people who can't man their own, what if we trust our customers to read their meters for the next three months? Send a pic? Just trying to open up alternative resources. I'm not sure if we are going to find enough man power for this.

CM Some other utilities have gone to estimating every month or every 3rd month. If we estimate, if customers believe it is wrong, you have to send someone back out. With increases in utility bills drive by the increase of natural gas. When you estimate you do get other issues.

RA We wanted to bring forward the issues with the troops.

RM When will the first subdivision go live?

CM Around 7 months. The meters we were expecting to be delivered, we are having all kinds of supply issues.

RA If we have the angry mob come up there, what would you like us to say?

CM I have a message, but I don't know if they will think it's satisfactory. The issue has been raised to the General Manager and the Chief People Officer. We do not want to lose people. I do not have an answer today. We are working through it. Management is aware all the way to the General Manager and recognize that it needs to be addressed.

JP We had 28 and we currently have 12. We have an entire city.

BG You create and fill more full time positions?

JP Yes, it was a miscommunication in the beginning.

BG What if the answer was increasing pay for the temps with a better understanding of expectations?

CM We are probably more successful hiring regular employees with benefits. Trying to look at the timing of when things would go live so we could get the numbers right.

JP Along with communication.

RS How often do PTTPs open?

RM Cycles, as needed. We just brought on 6, maybe 8 in the last few months.

CM If you think back, we had an exodus of folks following the COVID mandates. If we get people and they stay, we shouldn't see them go for a while.

RM I brought it on the floor last time. The camp we use to do, it gave them a wide variety of skills. Then they could apply for jobs because they had the skills.

CM We might not open it fully again, but maybe when it comes time. Create a mini academy.

BG In Water/Wastewater or different areas, if they have people retiring and come up with a demand for the supply. Five of my folks came from meter reading and they are outstanding employees. Water/Wastewater, we probably hire one or two employees every year. I think I could give an idea in timing with the AMI to map with the organization.

CM There is a lot of planning. I think we missed the calculation of when we move from full time to temps. We are now talking to see if we correct that or use temps and do something different with them.

LG Thank you for bringing this to Management's attention. I am sure we'll be ready to hear what we can come up with. Next. Grievance Form?

RA The City's is a generic form, or ours for our bargaining unit?

DW CWA National has a generic form, similar but just for CWA, just to change that.

RA If we can't do it here, then we will have to transcribe it. Statement of occurrence.

CM Is there new information to track that isn't on our form, or just makes it easier?

RA Easier. Instead of having two different forms.

PM I'd just want to make sure the information is on both.

BG Yes, and that you can make it electronic.

LG Hearing among the room, the management will review?

PM Yes, I want to sit down and line them up side by side.

RA Gas Department, PTTP. Changes in gas Measurement. We haven't heard anything. We are just wondering what's going on with it.

CM There is someone on the board from the Union?

DW If we could get the information.

CM Information from us?

BG I don't think there has been a PTTP board member meeting in a long time.

DW If we can get the information on this, so we can tell the natives.

CM We don't want to make changes that drives people off.

LG May we assess the meeting?

RA It was a good productive meeting.

BG It was a good meeting. Labor stuff will have to be solved someway, creative solutions.

RM It was a good discussion.

PB Good Meeting.

CM We had good ideas with a good meeting. I like the idea of customers reading the meters.

SV It was a fine meeting. Always a pleasure.

PM I agree with Steve, a lot of common interests.

RS Good meeting.

JP This is the second meeting I've been to and it was much better than the last.

LG Thank you all for being here and putting up with me instead of Mr. Heffner.