

**City of Tacoma Civil Service Board  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Date and Time:** November 7, 2019 at 5:00PM  
**Location:** Tacoma Municipal Building, Council Chambers  
**Chair:** Beckie Summers  
**Coordinator:** Wendy Hobson

**Call to Order:**

The Civil Service Board meeting was called to order in Council Chambers of the Tacoma Municipal Building at 5:00PM by Chair Summers. Board Members Sexton, Hansen, Heller and Andrews were present.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Chair Summers asked for a motion to approve the October 3, 2019 minutes. Board Member Sexton motioned to approve and the motion was seconded by Board Member Heller.

A VOICE VOTE WAS TAKEN: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, THE MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 3, 2019 WERE APPROVED AS WRITTEN.

**Communication for Information:**

Wendy Hobson, Coordinator, reviewed the upcoming agenda items for December and January. Chair Summers requested that the topic of residency be moved to the February meeting.

**Action on Matters Still Pending / New Business:**

The Chair advised HR Director, Gary Buchanan that the Board needs to receive presentation materials a week prior to the meeting.

HR Director Gary Buchanan provided an overview of the Human Resources Department which included some background history, recent accomplishments and current work the department is doing. The members of the HR Leadership team present were introduced; Cathy Journey, Sr. HR Manager, Olivia Polynice, EEO Officer, Ben Thurgood, Assistant Director CI and Training & Development, Kari Louie, Sr. Compensation & Benefits Manager, Cheryl Bidleman, Assistant Director (TPU), Wendy Hobson, Administrative Manager. Shelby Fritz, Assistant Director was not present.

Sexton: Questioned the status of the HR Analyst positions, classified or unclassified. Ms. Louie, Sr. Compensation & Benefits Manager responded HR Specialists and HR Analysts are classified.

Summers: Asked for clarification on the Management Analyst and Sr. HR Analyst positions, classified or unclassified. Mr. Buchanan stated they are unclassified. The Chair asked what the percentage was for classified and unclassified.

Hansen: Are you planning to address some of the classifications; who should be and who should not be classified in your presentation. This is what he is interested in; on what basis are we excluding positions from classified service? Ms. Louie will discuss this in her presentation.

Director Buchanan continued with the overview of HR reporting on the past, present and future of the department.

Heller: Asked for a list of Continuous Improvement projects. Assistant HR Director, Ben Thurgood indicated a list could be provided. He also reviewed some of the work his team is currently doing.

Chair: Questioned the Sustainable Policy Structure stating she did not understand why they have not heard anything about this as they are the elected body in charge of personnel rules.

Director Buchanan: Advised this is on the list to do; we don't have a current process in place and it's important.

Chair: Indicated this falls under the Board; she has looked at the rules and would like to change some of them; feels a disconnect between the Board and by giving them the material the night of the meeting feels a bit disrespected; that is why she has gone to the City Council and set up quarterly meetings in Lillian's group. The Chair indicated further stated that if she sees that we have personnel policy that's being discussed, we need to know about it. Part of our directive is to advise the Council and if we don't know it and I'm asked, I'm going to say no; we don't know anything about it; don't do it.

Hansen: reviewed past termination cases brought before the board lacking grounds have been particularly disturbing; has been better since Director Buchanan has been here.

Sexton: I didn't hear in report; curious what your relationship to us is; really appreciates Shelby, she does a great job. We used to always have the HR Director here to report; and we could have a rapport with the HR Director; this is 2<sup>nd</sup> time we've seen you.

Director Buchanan: gets briefed after every meeting by both Shelby and Wendy; I could be here for every one of them but my initiative was to hire super capable people and I don't want to undermine my staff. Initially, she was put here in a development role and she has flourished in that role.

Heller: There's been a lot of inconsistency of application of policy across the City; sometimes almost a violation of the civil service rules vs policy. Think policies and civil service rules can work together as long as super aware of one another. Questioned if the City was doing any work to train up new supervisors and managers.

Director Buchanan: That is one of our gaps; the entry level manager supervisor; Shelby and Cheryl are holding meet and greets at lunch time with supervisors to get them better equipped; Ben has introduced a major program here called LEAD; we have capabilities now in house to start coaching people before it gets to these extremes to address performance.

Heller: Historically the requests for information and material have fallen into the abyss. Example to be mindful of is the upcoming residency study session. We've asked for a preference; something similar to veterans preference; nothing has come before us.

Director Buchanan: Shelby is working on this; does not want to speak for her; I do know that Shelby has been doing a lot of research on this; she is out right now but I know she is working on this.

Chair: Appreciate what Shelby has done; our legal is also working on this; I'm sure Jennifer and Shelby are working on this. I want to echo it has gotten so much better since you have been here.

Kari Louie, Senior Compensation and Benefits Manager: Reported 47% of our staff are classified. Provided overview of Class and Comp Study which kicked off in April. Timeline of project was reviewed with details of what is happening now. We are on target. We are working on the Compensation Philosophy which is in your packet. The Consultant will be preparing the classification specifications when they are done based on this new structure making those recommendations and it is actually the City that will be reviewing and making recommendations regarding the classification category of the unclassified positions; they are reviewing non-represented positions; some of those are classified or unclassified but the ones that are unclassified are the ones that will be reviewed by the City not by the Consultant.

Heller: Were there identified comps; can you share with the Board

Ms. Louie: We have done some of the work with them so they can do the survey which will go out; that has not been published yet, we can talk about that. Reviewed the process for requesting a re-classification of a position; TMC code was reviewed

Hansen: looks to me that the exception to classified service are limited; what we've seen from other people and from you is there are quite a few positions categorized as unclassified; am having disconnect with why the exceptions to classified service are so limited, yet there are so many positions that have been put in the unclassified category.

Ms. Louie: This is reason why we are doing this study; it's been 10 years.

Hansen: Part of the work of the Consultant is that they will look at each position and determine if it is properly categorized or unclassified.

Ms. Louie: No, that will still be the City's responsibility



Heller: Has there been any audit or identification to go with unclassified positions like similar to and FLSA type audit where you identify which section that you're identifying that would make each position unclassified.

Ms. Louie: No, they are not provided that.

Heller: No, not them, the City; has there been any kind of documentation or an audit to look and identify what provision under the TMC would go with each position that would determine that was an unclassified position.

Ms. Louie: No, none of that has been provided at this time. We did not give a limited amount of job classifications or families like they did with the last study; they actually limited the number of classifications; that is where you've found we have some classifications that are too generic and we have some that maybe are too specific.

Hansen: Have you identified individuals who will make the determination if a position is improperly categorized as a classified or unclassified.

Ms. Louie: it would be Jen Peters, Compensation Manager working closely with the City Attorney's Office.

Hansen: I don't know if ad hoc determination on whether a position is going to be classified; and I know this has been going on for quite some time, before your tenure; but I'm not sure how we arrived at the spot we are in now where there are a lot of positions improperly categorized; and don't know if you have looked at that and what steps you might take so we don't have the same problem.

Director Buchanan: Once we get the data; we are trying to create the methodology with our consultants and I look at this as more of a comp reform than a study. We want to have the methodology, the processes and the confidence that we're doing this right. The methodology and the reform is as important to me as getting the jobs right.

Heller: There was a big push about 17 years ago to move positions out of the classified service; it would behoove you to do more of a detailed audit under the TMC what is it specifically that would authorize having a specific position be outside the classified service; I think that there are quite a few that are probably wrong based on that history which of course predates all y'all.

Ms. Louie: accessed City intranet Class and Comp site and walked the Board through the various items posted on that site including employee communications and project updates.

Heller: acknowledged Shelby and Wendy for providing the Board with copies of the documents posted on the Class and Comp intranet site.

Sexton: I received a letter prior to the Study started suggesting the City was out of compliance with too many unclassified positions on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor; so I came early to our next meeting

checking in with the officer in the hallway and gave him my city issued business card; and, I showed him the letter and my intent was to go up to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor and check it out; and was told under no uncertain terms I was not allowed to do that. There was a series of phone calls back and forth to the City Manager's office and I don't know who else; finally it was decided that someone would come down and answer questions for me; was like I was asking something completely impossible.

Summers: We have a document in front of us called the Compensation Philosophy; this comes out of the compensation study that is being done now. Does it apply to all employees or just the unclassified employees?

Ms. Louie: It applies to all employees. Joint Labor has reviewed it and is fine with the document.

Summers: This is a philosophy or policy? Are you saying the Civil Service Board because we are responsible for the classified employees this is just information we have no....

Ms. Louie: It's not a policy, it's an aspirational...

Director Buchanan: It's an aspirational vision that we're striving for

Jennifer Taylor, Counsel to the Board: The Compensation Plan is under the purview of the Council so this would be informational only for the Board.

Summers: The compensation portion is under the City Council; that's not what we're talking about. This impacts classified employees and their environment; that is under our purview, I would not that; again, when I had to go and see the committee; again, we know who owns the purse strings and that is not what we're asking and again what I'm hearing from the questions I'm asking, is this more a philosophy, a mission, what we want to be but if it impacts the environment of our employees, our classified staff I think the Civil Service Board has a say in it.

Sexton: There's a lot here; I was just handed this; don't know if anyone else has seen this before now. We didn't have an opportunity to see any of this; a date would be nice; guess it is not policy, not adopted, just a plan. I was just handed this; haven't read any of it.

Heller: Maybe we can set this forward to come back to it at the next meeting; I have some questions; just scanning this but maybe it would give you time to gather information; like on page three, there are curious statements I'm trying to wrap my head around what that means. I think one like geography, other locations the City hires from and loses candidates to, locally, regionally and internationally; what are you looking at for those? I'm interested in what the City considers comps; you have to compare yourself to someone, who are you comparing yourself to? Also, on page three it says market data may be adjusted to ensure accurate comparisons localized to the City's specific needs; I totally understand weighting the numbers but if you can help us understand how you're doing that. That would be helpful.



Summers: That's what we've been talking about on this Board; is the difficulty in recruiting and the desired level of talent in certain jobs. We've been talking about pension issues. We've been talking about significant changes in the economy. We are on the same page and I just feel as if the use of the Board; we have experts up here from all different walks and they are an elected body. I'm not, actually the employees elect me. We're on the same page, we'd just like to get to doing the same actions and not be adversarial and this coming before us today, we didn't have a chance to review it and if it has any impact on the environment of our classified employees; we need more information.

Sexton: Is this seen as a finished document or is it the start of the idea or the end of the idea?

Ms. Louie: It's the end as we're wanting to get it to Council

Sexton: You've been working on this?

Ms. Louie: Yes, several groups have been reviewing it.

Hansen: I've spent most of my career cleaning up messes of supervisors who don't know what they're doing and I think you mentioned that you are trying to create a training program for supervisors; think that's a very good step in the right direction because I think supervisors need to know that they can hold their employees accountable, but at the same time treat them with respect and dignity and when that happens you've got a much more efficient workplace. When you have a workgroup with a poor supervisor, all the work and energy goes to that incompetent supervisor rather than dealing with whatever your department has been set out to do.

Director Buchanan: I just want to make an anecdotal comment that there are so many behind the scenes that are resolved with the expertise of the folks in this room working with those supervisors and the employees and their Business Agent. We work so many things out that don't reach the threshold here and if we didn't, it would have possibly reached your threshold.

Summers: Thank you for your presentation, I actually have information I can work with. I do want the Board to know as I've stated a couple times tonight the Government Performance and Finance Committee asked that I come in and talk about the Residency Waiver and we got into other topics. At the direction of Councilmember Hunter, we will be meeting quarterly with City Council and Human Resources so these communication problems, will be worked out. Plan one more day for Civil Service Board work quarterly.

Ms. Taylor: For clarification, will this be with the entire Board? Will it be during the work day; because if so, I will have to be present?

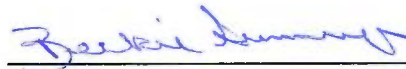
Summers: As I understand it, the Coordinator for the committee is working that out now with the Human Resources Department and it will be as a committee meeting under the City Council; so if that's going to get us in trouble, you need to let the City Council know. It will be the same time slot the committee meets now; that is 10:00am on Tuesdays.

Heller: I just want to make one comment and that is if our Coordinator could give us as much notice as possible; as much heads up as can be to try to make those types of meetings would be much appreciated.

Ms. Hobson: This is the first I've heard of these meetings and it sounds like the Coordinator for the GPFC may be scheduling these so I will connect with her.

Meeting adjourned at 6:28PM

ATTEST:



Beckie Summers, Chair



Wendy Hobson

Civil Service Board Coordinator