

Subject: HRD- AGENA Questions

**FY 2019 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/13/2018

The following information is provided in response to a request made by John Vihstadt and Libby Garvey via email on 3/27/2018.

After meeting with the Arlington General Employees Associations (AGENA), Mr. Vihstadt and Ms. Garvey raised a number of questions detailed below.

1. CLINIC: What consideration has been given to allowing County retirees to use the clinic, perhaps on a limited hours basis and/or as a pilot program? AGENA believes that clinic use by retirees, like active employees, could help contain healthcare expenses for retirees, employees and County taxpayers alike. They are very pleased with the clinic expansion to five days a week and have had positive experiences using this benefit.

We are pleased to hear that employees are having positive experiences at the clinic. The clinic is open four days a week and is typically at capacity serving active employees. While clinic usage does assist in our cost containment efforts, it would be difficult to serve retirees with current staffing. As we develop the FY 2020 budget we will consider expanding the hours available in the clinic as part of the overall compensation package.

2. HEALTH INSURANCE: With employees having the option to choose from among Kaiser, the "80-20" program and co-insurance, does it make business sense to incentivize use of co-insurance by employees? There was wide support for co-insurance among the group of about six with whom I met.

The current premium structure (bi-weekly payroll deductions) is designed to encourage enrollment in the co-insurance plan, which now has our largest enrollment. We are continuing to educate employees about potential cost savings, for themselves and the plan, through use of the coinsurance plan.

3. SEQUOIA EMPLOYMENT CENTER: Given proposed cutbacks, how will service to particularly hard-to-place prospective workers be prioritized?

The reduction in personnel in the Arlington Employment Center will not impact the ability to serve hard-to-place prospective workers. After reductions, there are still 13 employment services specialists remaining to serve the public. Caseloads are down and customers seeking services are down, so there is no lack of capacity to serve the public. The VIEW, SNAPET and WIOA programs, that aim to serve the hardest-to-place, will not be impacted by these cuts.

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4. **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE:** Has the Manager considered dedicated bereavement leave for County employees either in addition to or in lieu of any current benefits? AGENA believes that such a benefit would be of great interest to many workers who now must invade their personal leave to tend to departed family members.

As part of the ongoing benefits study, a work group will be looking at our leave programs, as well as other benefits such as disability, child care, and telework. Addition of bereavement leave will be a part of their review.

5. **COMPRESSED WORK WEEK VERSUS TELEWORK:** An employee advised that he had to choose between a compressed, 4-day workweek, which he took, and telework. What is the rationale for this either/or proposition?

Decisions about employee schedules, including compressed workweek and telework options, are made at the supervisory level. The County must balance service delivery needs with employee requests for these options. We suggest that the employee contact their supervisor regarding the rationale in this instance.

6. **EMPLOYEE COUNCIL:**

- A. There was unhappiness that the Manager's Employee Council last met in November 2017 (and before that, February 2017). They believe that a meeting should have occurred prior to the CM's budget rollout, as was apparently done in early 2017, to provide feedback opportunity.

The goal is for the Employee Council to meet quarterly. On occasion, due to either scheduling issues or lack of agenda items, the meeting is cancelled. Members of the Council may reach out to Human Resources at any time if there are issues they wish to raise.

- B. It was observed that there is currently no DHS employee on the Employee Council, which is contrary to the required composition of the Council. Why does this continue to be the case?

Most AGENA members are DHS employees. DHS therefore has representation on Employee Council through the AGENA representative, currently Jewyll Davis. The Employee Council is made up of representatives from the six Employee Resource Groups (Fire Union, Police Union, Police Association, ALIANZA, AFSCME, and AGENA), along with six representatives appointed by the County Manager. The appointed members serve for a term of three years and typically are from departments whose employees are not represented by one of the above groups.

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7. EMPLOYEE COUNCIL

- A. The Employee Council is supposed to meet quarterly and has not yet met this year? They would like to know when that meeting will be.

The next meeting is planned for mid-April.

- B. There has always been a DHS representative on the Employee Council (Suzanne Eisner), but there is not now. They think there should be?

Please see responses to Question #6 above.

8. EARLY RETIREMENT INCENTIVE: They say that 2 people who took the early retirement package were only 10 days from retirement and so should not have gotten any incentive to retire?

As with any incentive program, there are be cut-off dates for eligibility and departure dates. Occasionally an employee who already had retirement plans meets the eligibility criteria for the program and receives the incentive. For consistency and fairness, we do not deny someone the incentive if they meet the established criteria.

9. EXTEND DROP PROGRAM: Should we consider extending the DROP program from 3 to 5 years?

One of the primary objectives of the DROP program is to allow the County to retain talent and provide for a period of known transition time to transfer knowledge to a potential successor. An extension beyond the current three year program would also need to be balanced against providing opportunities for growth for other employees in the organization and encouraging timely succession planning. We will be evaluating this as part of the broader benefit review.

10. BEREAVEMENT LEAVE: Could we consider Bereavement Leave?

Please see the response to Question #4 above.

11. VACATION LEAVE MAXIMUM CARRYOVER: AGENA employees have use leave after accumulating 280 hours or lose the leave. Supervisors do not have to use or lose leave until they get to 320 hours. Shouldn't it be the same for everyone?

Almost all employees have the 280-hour carryover limit, with any accrued vacation over that amount converting to sick leave. Only those employees at the Division Chief and Department Director level (not all "supervisors") have the higher carryover limit. The higher carryover limit is part of the overall package used to recruit senior leaders. It is important for all employees to use their vacation leave to refresh and recharge, which is the main reason we have leave maximums.

12. COST OF KAISER HEALTH PLAN: APS uses Kaiser like we do, but their employees pay less. Why?

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In reviewing our current Kaiser rates with APS rates, County employees actually pay less at every tier. This may not always be the case. It is always difficult to compare health plans because of differences in plan design and the demographics of those enrolled.