

Finance Committee Meeting

July 20, 2004, 3:00 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Bowers and Powell, Mr. Marini

Absent: Commissioner Garcia

Invited Guests: Michelle Hill, U of R; Judy DeCoursey, RIT; Sarah Felitti, Xerox; Duffy Palmer; Chuck Bowen; Ed Cavalier, ASAR; Marge Brumfield, RAP; Dan Karin, Deputy City Clerk; Joanne Giuffrida, RCSD

Commissioner Bowers convened the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Discussion:

Commissioner Bowers opened the meeting with a brief summary of how the committee got to this point and introductions of those present.

Mr. Palmer stated that the taskforce recommended the Board approach domestic partners from a policy angle because unions do not have enough members that give it a priority ranking to negotiate for it. He views it as a matter of equal rights.

Mr. Cavalier stated that it is the next logical step for their union. They have raised it at the negotiation table since the City of Rochester acted to provide such benefit to its employees. However, it is not an issue for a significant number of the membership, so they have not yet been successful in negotiating this benefit. As administrators are responsible for teaching tolerance to students, they should model.

Ms. Felitti noted that Xerox does not require any form of certificate. This benefit is administered on the honor system. There is a six month joint residency requirement before eligible; intertwined financially; sole domestic partner; provided to same sex and opposite sex partners. It was established in 1998. When a relationship is terminated, the employee is responsible to go online (self-service benefits administered by third-party) and remove.

Ms. DeCoursey noted that RIT requires an affidavit; 12 month joint residency; sole domestic partner; intertwined financially; and is offered to both same and opposite sex partners. Their program was established in 1998 as well. They offer all benefits legally able to for the domestic partner. She noted that of approximately 2700 employees, there are 40 participants, of which 14 are same sex. Employee is responsible for notifying organization of termination of the partnership. However, Cobra benefits are offered to the partner as would be to the employee.

Ms. Hill stated that the University of Rochester does require the certificate that can be obtained from the City of Rochester; six months joint residency; intertwined financially; defined as someone you cannot legally marry; only medical and dental benefits. Their program was established in 1996. Ms. Hill stated that participation is less than 0.5% of their enrolled population (approximately 10,000). The employee is responsible for notifying the University of termination, who then makes Cobra benefits available to the partner.

Mr. Kairn stated that the City has fewer same sex participants than heterosexual. Their program for City employees was established in 1994.

Ms. Giuffrida noted that the City has 117 participants, of which 13 are same sex.

Mr. Bowen stated it was his position that this benefit should extend beyond health care coverage to bereavement leave, etc.

Ms. Giuffrida stated that she did not support that. The District needs to demonstrate fiscal constraint. She noted her concern about expanding already generous benefits.

Mr. Bowen also noted his opposition to a phase in of benefits. He suggested that the reason organizations were seeing low participation numbers is because there is still some reluctance by employees to be forthcoming about their partnership.

Ms. DeCoursey noted that it is important to educate the employees regarding the taxability of this benefit. It is critical that they understand this component as it has implications on their overall income level and tax liability. She added that in most cases it is not beneficial to participate in this benefit unless the partner does not have access to benefits.

Commissioner Powell stated that it would be important that the District provide counseling to the employees considering this benefit.

Commissioner Bowers asked Ms. Giuffrida to provide a list of benefits beyond medical/dental that could be extended.

Mr. Cavalier and Ms. Brumfield concur that it is a question of equality.

Mr. Bowen stated a waiting period between 12 and 24 months would be appropriate.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Bowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Commissioner Powell, Seconded by Commissioner Bowers. Adopted 2-0 with Commissioner Garcia absent at 4:15 p.m.

Action Items:

- Ms. Giuffrida to provide list of benefits beyond medical and dental to committee
- Committee follow up at August meeting and finalize recommendations to Board