

Commissioner Burke called to order the Employee Recruitment and Retention Workshop of the Lee County Mosquito/Hyacinth Control Districts (LCMHCD) on 06/22/2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the William Opp Training Center at the Districts' headquarters, 15191 Homestead Road, Lehigh Acres, Florida 33971.

PRESENT:

Seat 1- Commissioner Ed Brantley
Seat 2- Commissioner Brian Farrar
Seat 3- Commissioner Mike Ellis
Seat 4- Commissioner Steve Bowen, Secretary/Treasurer
Seat 5- Commissioner William Burke, Chairman
Seat 6- Commissioner Thomas B. Hart, Vice Chairman
Seat 7- Commissioner Bruce Scott
Legal Counsel- John Agnew

STAFF:

Executive Director- Dr. David Hoel
Assistant Director- Aaron Lloyd
Deputy Director, Public Information and Education- Eric Jackson
Deputy Director, Lee County Hyacinth Control District- Kevin Watts
Chief Financial Officer- Sean O'Neill
Human Resources Director- Jackie Small
IT Director- Keith Lowe
Senior Program Analyst- Thais Pineda Alfonso
Community Engagement Coordinator- Jamie Fowler
HR Representative- Sabina Vilarchao

VISITORS:

None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

The following citizens addressed the Board:

None

LCMHCD Employee Recruitment and Retention Discussion: Executive Director Dr. Hoel discussed the following topics for Lee County Mosquito Control District:

1. High employee turnover- rates and fields
2. Reasons: storms, high cost of living, other job opportunities
3. Home purchase training seminar
4. 401/457 plan withdrawal for home down payment
5. Tuition reimbursement
6. Team building events
7. 3% retirement (pilots)
8. Personal days off
9. 4/10 workweek non-season
10. Retention bonuses

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner Burke asked "What is the hourly pay for employees on the lowest pay grade?" Dr. Hoel responded "The minimum is about \$20.00 an hour."

Commissioner Burke asked "How much time do they need to shadow adequately before they're working independently?" Aaron responded "It can take anywhere from 2 to 3 months before they can work on their own."

Commissioner Burke asked "What kind of job are they doing?" Dr. Hoel responded "Field Inspector will drag the hose through the woods, marsh, and other areas to spray mosquitoes. Often, they will fly out and treat aerially."

Commissioner Farrar asked "What are the number of employees we're looking to retain?" Dr. Hoel responded "We have between 30 to 35 field workers and these employees are the ones I'm most concerned about." However, we have lost 2 pilots to the airlines and we need to discuss retention for those positions as well.

Commissioner Farrar asked "Are we advertising the pilot position that gears toward the military personnel? Jackie responded "No we have not been advertising for pilots in the military."

Commissioner Hart asked "How many people are we looking for?" How long have we been looking?" Dr. Hoel responded "We're backfilling as employees resign from the district". Commissioner Hart stated, "Perhaps we need more people, instead of 98 full-time employees' maybe we need 105, this way all our departments are covered."

Commissioner Hart commented "Tuition reimbursement I'm opposed to the idea of paying tuition to have an employee get a degree, and then leave the district to work elsewhere. I do like the idea of 4/10 workweek in non-season. Next, retention bonuses you pay it over time, not upfront."

Commissioner Bowen asked "We have backfilled approximately ten employees. As of today, do we have any open positions?" Dr. Hoel responded "Yes, there are both full-time and seasonal positions open."

Commissioner Bowen commented "I assume as the employees resign we are conducting exit interviews and are receiving solid information from the employee." Aaron responded "Yes, I'm conducting the exit interviews to get a better understanding of their decision to leave the district."

Commissioner Bowen asked "Are we advising our seasonal employees there's a possibility to becoming full-time, when the opportunity presents itself?" Dr. Hoel responded "Yes, we absolutely do."

Commissioner Ellis asked "Are we having trouble recruiting new employees after people leave?" Aaron responded "No, we are able to get candidates and interview them but they have various backgrounds that we usually don't see for these type of positions."

Commissioner Brantley commented "The high cost of living is out of our control, although it probably will get a little better in the future. Furthermore, there's other opportunities that we do have a little control over to be more competitive. As I reviewed the list, there are three that got my attention: tuition reimbursement, if there's a retention agreement associated with it. The personal days off I feel is a big one, we probably need a system where the employees can take summer vacations. If it requires hiring additional seasonal staff to always have coverage, then we should consider it. The last one would be the retention bonuses. This could be based on performance based incentives. For example, if you successfully went through training or made it to your one year anniversary maybe offer a bonus."

Commissioner Burke commented "I like the idea of tuition reimbursement paying back over time a 3 to 5 year period as long they're working for LCMHCD. The 4/10 workweek in non-season I'm in favor of. The home purchase training seminar is really good in conjunction with some other plan." Dr. Hoel responded "Tuition reimbursement I've been opposed to in the past, simply because we have so many employees compared to your average Florida mosquito control district. If we were to go forward with this program there would have to be limited scope of degrees that would reflect the line of work they're doing. The 4/10 workweek would have to take place the beginning of November thru February, very limited timeframe. Team building events is another option we're looking into. Occasionally, once or twice a year have a team building event for LCMHCD."

Assistant Director, Aaron Lloyd stated he would like to spend some time discussing pilot positions retention and recruitment. Early we stated that there were no issue recruiting field inspectors but that is not the case with pilots. It has been extremely difficult to find qualified pilots with the skill set required. After discussions with the current pilots and those that have left for the airlines; flexibility of time, four 10 hour work days per week, and 3% FRS retirement (high risk category) are items that would make LCMCD pilot positions much more attractive. We simply cannot offer competitive salaries to the airlines so we need to look at other options.

No further business, Chairman Burke made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.



Commissioner Brian Farrar, Chairman

William Burke

Term: December 2018 – November 2022



Commissioner Ed Brantley, Secretary/Treasurer

Term: November 2020 – November 2024