



Florida Public Personnel Association, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

FPPA Website: www.fppa.org

2nd Quarter, 2009

The FPPA Newsletter is published Quarterly by the Florida Public Personnel Association. Submission of member's workplace experiences or news of interest is encouraged. If you would like to submit an article for publication in the July issue please contact Joe Denaro, joe.denaro@titusville.com or call 321 383 5820.

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A Message from the President

Bonnie Steinberg

Human Resources & Risk/Safety Manager, City of Dunedin

What a challenging time in our world today--people losing their jobs and homes in foreclosure. I'm sure you have heard about the recent situation in Binghamton, NY involving a man who lost his job and killed 13 people, then killed himself. The following is quoted from the St. Petersburg Times regarding this killing:

Some see ties to economy in rash of killings

"Comparative statistics are difficult to come by, but during the past month alone, at least eight mass homicides in the country have claimed the lives of 57 people.

The factor underlying the violence, some experts think, is the dismal state of the nation's economy. Criminologists theorize that the epidemic of layoffs, the meltdown of storied US corporations and the uncertainty of recovery have stoked fear, anxiety and desperation across society...."

Although it really hasn't been determined that the economy is to blame, it certainly raises some questions about the cause of these horrendous crimes.

Some of your employees or their spouses may be let go from their job. In some cases, both may lose their jobs. Without the needed income, some are losing cars and homes are being foreclosed. This can cause enormous stress and anxiety for anyone. Some of these employees may be in need of your Employee Assistance (EAP) services.

That being said, now is not the time to cut EAP. Many of you have been directed to reduce your budgets. But, before you consider cutting your EAP services, I hope that you will give serious thought before you discontinue EAP.

On a much lighter note....Are you ready to go exploring? That is, searching for the fountain of HR knowledge? Actually, I would really like to find that Fountain of Youth. Maybe I could get rid of some of these wrinkles. (But, that's another story.) Your host committee is busy making plans for another great conference. This year's theme is "In Search of the HR Fountain of Knowledge". If you haven't already made your reservations, please do so now.

Regarding the new FPPA website and salary survey...we are continuing to work with Evergreen Solutions and our goal is to "roll out" the new site at this year's conference.

Again, I wish to welcome all of our new members.

If you would like to get more involved in your association, please contact one of the board members.

Hope to see you all in St. Augustine!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2009

CONFERENCE

August 1-5, 2009

Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village

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“A View from the Porch”
An Essay by Pres. Elect., Lee

Greetings from the Porch. Hope everyone is doing well, or at least as well as can be expected given these economic times and trials. **STAY POSITIVE!!!** Remember, things can, and probably will, get worse! You need some emotional room left in order to hit bottom (thud), survive, and start climbing back up. Come on.....just kidding!

I'm often amazed at how easy it is to "set the tone" in your organization, especially as HR leaders, just by how you act. Your attitude, your demeanor and your outlook on the situation, is important to the mental health of those around you. If you are projecting negative attitudes and a dark, "woe is me (us)" demeanor, your co-workers and others in your organization that depend on you will mirror those things. Your job as an HR professional is to communicate calm professionalism at all times. I know sometimes that can be difficult, especially if you are going through your own trying times. You know how that "one" person with a negative attitude can affect the attitudes of all those around? You've most likely had to address that issue at some point during your HR career right? Well, you don't want to *be* that person do you?

If your organization is going through difficult economic times, reducing the budget, no raises, reducing salaries and especially if you are having to cut employees, **you** need to stay positive. "What?" you say? Get real Lee. How in the world can anyone be positive about that? Look, it's no secret that this entire nation is in a recession. People are losing their jobs, their insurance, their homes even. It's not a surprise to anyone, including your employees. My feeling is that if the "inevitable" is going to happen, regardless of exactly what "it" is, you need to *communicate* as effectively as possible with your work force. As you know, into any vacuum, rumors rush in. If you aren't getting information out, someone else will fill the void. The problem is that everyone wants *more* information than you have at the moment. I know, I get it.

Our strategy has been to meet with the union leadership, as well as our employees on a department/division level, and explain exactly what is happening. We are having to submit a 12% budget reduction, which ultimately, *has* to effect some employees by a job loss. Every department is currently working on their budgets. We have asked the unions and the employees to submit any ideas they have for budget reduction consideration. This has allowed us to have a dialogue with our employees and even sometimes explain why some money has to be spent on certain things, and how some funds (CRA's, tourist tax dollars, etc) can't be intermingled. We have also started dialogue with our City Commissioners early on about the potential painful budget cuts that may have to happen.

Our Chief Administrative Officer has formed a Task Force (that would be me and some others) to explore ways to incentivize employees to leave voluntarily, and the existence of that committee was also communicated to all employees. That same task force will also work together to do the very best we can to make the transition for any employee that is laid off as less stressful as possible. Not sure how effective anyone can be when mitigating a job loss,

but it's much better to do everything you can to help a potential "soft landing", than to sit around crying gloom and doom. This is when we, as HR professionals have to "step up" and set the tone. Treat everyone with dignity and respect, and give people as much notice and assistance as possible to help weather this storm.

It also means that you will need to "recharge" *your* batteries after or while going through difficult times. That is one reason the annual FPPA conference is important. You need to spend time with other HR professionals who are also going through the same things organizationally that you are. We may also need to commiserate with one another there, instead of at work. Even more important, is when things get tough, you tend to get more charges, complaints and potentially, litigation. There are some very important topics being covered at the conference this year, to include the new FMLA and ADA updates, things to do or not do during a reduction in force, as well as some important information on cutting costs (big time costs like health insurance) for your organization. Even with limited budgets, you need to make the pitch to your supervisor, that these topics are critical to the organization.

I have placed the draft of the "Conference At A Glance" on the FPPA website, so use that to convince your managers of the value of your attendance. While it is a draft, rest assured that I have confirmed all of the speakers and topics listed. I just have to get a "Keynote" speaker, and fill the last slot on Wednesday. I have obtained names and mailing addresses of all of the County and City Managers from the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities and will be mailing letters to them this week, listing some of the topics covered at the conference and encouraging them to let you attend, even with limited budgets. (*Actually, my wonderful Senior Administrative Assistant, **Sigried**, has done all the work*). I know many of you work for other agencies besides a County or City government, so if you would like, send me the name and mailing address of your highest executive, and I will send them a letter as well. My email address is lee.brown@cityoforlando.net.

Well, I realize my articles are probably much too long, but when you sit on the porch in a rocking chair, time and words just flow by.

See you on the porch at the conference.

VP Lee

A Regional Coordinator Update
Tom Neal, Vice President

As of this writing, your Board is very pleased there are two seminars being held in the near future. On April 28, West Central Regional Coordinator Gail Coel of Sarasota County will be hosting an informative Seminar "The Economic Impact on HR". Gail has lined up some highly qualified speakers

to present topics “Legal Updates”, “FSLA”, “Employee Relations” and “Reducing Employee Stress During Stressful Times Pays Off”. Then, on May 14, Central Regional Coordinator Wendy Widmann,

City of Cocoa, will be hosting a Seminar with topics “Packing Your Survival Kit – Tips from an HR Professional”, “Using Your Survival Kit – Legal Issues”, “Economic Issues – Incentives that won’t break the bank” and lastly, “Political Issues – When Life Hands you Lemons, Make Lemonade”. Further information on the Seminars may be found on the FPPA website www.fppa.org

We anticipate there will be additional seminars at other locations later in the year. When the programs are developed and placed on the FPPA website, a member-wide e-mail will be sent announcing where, when, etc.

Our annual conference is fast approaching and your Board is looking forward to meeting and greeting all attendees. PLEASE make early registration at the hotel and send your conference registration to Sally Ellison, Host Committee Chair soon.

Treasurer Update
Portia Dinkins

Membership Update from the Treasurer

Hello FPPA!

As you all know, we are well on our way to finalizing the upcoming Annual Conference and we are very excited about the program this year.

If you have not already renewed your membership, now is the time! We would appreciate payment as soon as possible. If you have not renewed your membership, you will be charged the non-member conference rate. That rate is \$50 more for each registration for a total of \$150.

You may access the Membership Application of the FPPA website www.fppa.org. *There is also a credit card payment form available if you wish to pay by MasterCard, Visa or Discover.

Agency Membership - \$125.00 (Membership covers three individuals)

Individual Membership - \$50.00

Qualified Retiree Membership - \$15.00

Associate Membership - \$125.00

Student Membership (Not employed in a full time capacity at an agency) \$15.00

*All credit card payments will include a 5% processing fee.

Mail Membership application and payment to :

Florida Public Personnel Association
Portia Dinkins, Treasurer

401 East Las Olas Blvd.
#130-452
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
Phone: 561-243-7154
Fax: 561-243-7082

On behalf of the Executive Board, thank you for your continued support.

Medical Insurance Benefit – 2009 Renewal Update

Joe Denaro, Secretary

This article is a follow up to our ongoing discussion regarding our Healthcare medical benefits program and what to expect for renewal, effective October 1, 2009.

Based on the City of Titusville's current cumulative experience over the last 12 months through February, 2009 the city's claims ratio is 102%. This means that for every dollar our healthcare carrier (Cigna) received from the City's premium payment, it has averaged paying 102 cents out in claims. However since October 1, 2008 renewal, through February, 2009 the claims ratio is better, about 88%. However, either way we are about 3% to

17% worse than break even. Since the carrier's retention is about 15% of the premium to cover administrative costs, operation of the network, claim payment and profit it is obvious that we are looking at a very substantial escalation at renewal. If we are fortunate perhaps we can convince our carrier to weigh more heavily the recent experience to soften the increase.

If our claims ratio were at a point of breakeven the city should expect a "trend" increase of about 12% plus additional percentage points for receiving the renewal early. We would expect other insurers would likely utilize Cigna's claims and project forward a renewal which is believed to be not very far off what ever Cigna would be projecting.

Before we think a Request for Proposals (RFP) might be appropriate this year, we are trying to get a good early handle on what the insurer's renewal is likely to be, with no plan changes, and perhaps with some modification. We have asked the incumbent insurer to provide a renewal indication before deciding whether an RFP is necessary.

We have met with our insurer and asked for the following options:

1. A renewal with benefits and contributions as is (no changes) and more heavily weigh the experience since October 1 renewal.
2. Suggest plan design changes that could result in the renewal rate increase being no greater than 15% and alternatively no greater than 10%.
3. Recommend anything else that would help with a better renewal cost than projected without any plan changes.

We are also looking at partnering with Parrish Medical Center in Titusville to increase their health

care clinic services with the city to keep costs down much like what has been done in Port St. Lucie, Palm Bay, Ocoee, Apopka and Ocala. We think with the increased access to the Parrish health care clinic which is already in a convenient location, and expanded hours, medical services can be offered at a lower price compared to the cost of urgent care, visiting a physician's office and less than treatment in an Emergency Room.

We are working with our carrier and Parrish Medical Center in analyzing the financial impact of the visits. We are also considering a partnership with Brevard County, Brevard County Schools and Parrish Medical Center to pool our resources and maximize cost discounts.

We think by getting our insurance carrier to see if they can work with Parrish Medical Center clinic which offers preventive services, we can save our health plan a lot of money while our employees get the care they need faster and with less hassle.

I look forward to discussing these issues further with you and hearing from our speakers when we will meet at our annual conference in beautiful St. Augustine.

2009 Pre Conference Academy Update

Vickie Cannoy, Academy Director

Wow, this year is flying by fast! The board is working hard behind the scenes to make your pre-conference and conference a huge success. Some of the classes offered at the pre-conference will be: Moving from a Point-Factor System to Market-Pricing, Employee Privacy Rights in the Workplace, The Future of Healthcare, the 2009 Bargaining Bill and it's impact on Florida Public Employers. As you can tell from the variety of classes, there is something for everyone.

The time to get your certification or re-certification applications to me has been extended. Once you have completed the forms they can be mailed to me at City of Lakeland, 228 South Massachusetts Ave, Lakeland, Florida 33801 Attention: Vickie Cannoy, or faxed at 863.834.6004 or e-mailed to vickie.cannoy@lakelandgov.net.

If you have questions about what is required to achieve certification or re-certification, please visit our website at www.fppa.org and click on the "FPPA Certification" link on the right side of the page. Please remember when you are attending the Pre-Conference make sure you sign in both days, as this is the only way you will receive credit for attending the pre-conference.

Scholarship Application



FPPA – Annual Scholarship Application

The Florida Public Personnel Association is a professional organization of public sector human resources professionals and consultants. Each year, the Association awards up to \$2,000 in scholarship grants to qualified students in the State, seeking a degree in Human Resources. The award will vary depending on the number of qualified applicants.

Interested students must meet the following requirements below:

- + At least a sophomore currently enrolled in either an undergraduate program or be a graduate program student.
- + Earned at least a 2.75 cumulative GPA (transcript provided)

Interested students must submit the following:

- + Provide a letter written by the student explaining why they need the scholarship and why they wish to enter the HR field.
- + Attach an article or paper on a current HR topic you have already written.
- + Current contact information

Submit documents by May 22, 2009 to:

Debbie McDonald, Past President
Florida Public Personnel Association
c/o City of Ocoee – HR Department
150 N. Lakeshore Drive
Ocoee, FL 34761
dmcDonald@ci.ocoe.fl.us
407-905-3100 ext. 1050

A selection committee will evaluate all entries. The FPPA Executive Board must approve the recommended candidates. The Association reserves the right to announce the name of the recipients and their educational institution at its Annual Awards Luncheon on August 3, 2009.

Annual Conference Update
Sally Ellison, Host Committee Chair

The 2009 Annual Conference is shaping up very well. If you hadn't noticed yet, the Pre-Conference Agenda and Conference-At-A-Glance are posted on the website. It looks like it will be a very exciting schedule and should help us find our own personal "Fountain of Knowledge" to take back to our agencies.

If you haven't already sent in your Conference Registrations because of budgets but you know you will be attending, please fax, mail, or email your registrations ahead so we can get a count on how many to expect. Then you can mail your check at a later date prior to the Conference. Please do not wait until the conference to turn in your registrations. We want to make sure we have made plans so that everyone attending will be taken care of. Menus and hotel accommodations are needed to ensure we have "plenty for everyone".

www.wgv.com

www.oldcity.com

Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village St. Augustine, Florida

500 South Legacy Trail
St. Augustine, FL 32092
Reservations: 1-888-740-7272
Direct Line: 904-940-8000

Room rates are \$139.00 per night. To make a reservation, contact the Passkey Call Center at (800) 266-9432, and be sure to refer to the FPPA 2009 Conference.

There will be a fee for the parking valet, but no fee for self-parking. Registration forms for the Pre-Conference and the Conference are on the website at <http://www.fppa.org/conference/conf2009/conf2009.asp>

Completed forms should be sent to:

Sally Ellison
c/o Manatee County Sheriff's Office, Human Resources
600 301 Blvd. W. #202
Bradenton, FL 34205
(941) 747-3011, ext 2132

Sally Ellison
2009 Host Committee Chairman

FPPA Legislative Committee Chair Report

Phil Rosenberg

The Legislative Session in Tallahassee is half concluded. Approximately one more month remains in the regular session. This is the time of maximum vulnerability for potential impacts to be felt by local government as a result of what the Legislature does. It is time, as Robbie the Robot would say, when we should go around chanting "Danger Will Robinson, Danger!"

The overriding concern for the Legislature is the same one being faced by local governments throughout the State. Namely, budgets that are not balanced and how to close the gap. Florida's budget is billions of dollars out of whack and time is limited to determine what decisions will have to be made to increase revenue significantly, cut back significantly or some combination of both. There is of course no single "magic bullet." The Legislature is looking at applying expected Federal stimulus money against the deficit. That certainly will help, but as usual, it is an example of short-term thinking. The stimulus money is one time in nature but the problems of insufficient revenue and compounding costs represent a structural ongoing problem.

At the State level there remains a zeal for appearing to be tax cutters, there is a great reluctance or fear to use any words remotely sounding like "tax increase." Nonetheless it will be a year when we are likely to see an array of fee increases and whining about the continued economic troubles of the world. There is a direct impact on a State like Florida which depends a lot on tourism at a time when that is a struggling industry. Even Disney laid off nearly two thousand people, some of whom were no doubt "cast members" portraying perhaps even Mickey Mouse!

The mid point of a Legislative session is also the beginning of the culling process in which the flurry of Bills introduced at the beginning of the session amid a flurry of press conferences gets whittled down to the few and sometimes the dangerous. Bills have been introduced that would restrict local government's ability not only to raise property tax revenue but to charge fees. There was a Bill that proposed cutting salaries for elected and appointed officials in the State by 5%. It is generally true that for a Legislative Committee in a professional association, it is neither particularly valuable nor possible to focus in on all of the many Bills. This is because rather few of them will end up being approved and signed by the Governor. Even the "finalists" may not emerge from the primordial swamp of the Legislative Session the way they appeared when they were first introduced. Rather, it's

a time to generally be watchful. That will continue with any call for action by FPPA members being reserved for a time closer to the end of the session.

Meanwhile at the Federal level there is another effort, this time likely to be successful, to mandate Collective Bargaining for Public Safety Officers employed by Cities, Counties and the State. The Administration and the Congress are much more likely to move that Bill through to success this year than in the past. It is annoying because it would represent a Federal mandate and usurp some of the authority held dear by local governments. For example, it would mandate a dispute resolution mechanism on local governments which generally means binding and compulsory arbitration. It ignores each State's individual history of Collective Bargaining and would also place authority for the oversight of the process in a Federal oversight agency – the Federal Labor Relations Authority. This kind of Federal level mischief erodes local government independence and home rule and succumbs to the extensive and prolonged lobbying efforts of groups such as the IAFF. The Bill has been defeated repeatedly in past years. This year the political climate has changed and the Bill is likely to move forward to a well heralded signing ceremony in which the President will be posing next to America's true heroes as the Bill becomes law.

It certainly has the potential to complicate Labor Relations work in many jurisdictions around the country. It will ensure even more employment opportunities for Labor Attorneys, and provide the Unions with additional avenues for success in relation to public sector membership growth. Ironically, this increased likelihood of additional avenues for Union success comes in the midst of an economic reality that makes it even harder for local governments to do well when their flexibility is curtailed. If anything, local government needs more flexibility to meet obligations now rather than more restrictions.

There is also an IRS rule change proposal being reported that would end the practice, assuming the reports are correct, of "double dipping" by public officials in Florida and elsewhere. The basic idea being discussed is that an employee in the State who has not yet reached "normal retirement age" would no longer be allowed to retire, begin collecting a pension, and report back to work soon afterwards doing the same job that they were doing before and collecting a salary. A press report stated that more than two hundred Florida elected and appointed officials had been engaged in this practice. The IRS was looking toward possible corrective action with penalties and a possible retroactive date. Whether or not such a practice is good public policy, the point to be watched here is not only the idea of a retroactive application of a new or amended rule, but also overriding established practices in other public agency policies or retirement systems. There will no doubt be more to come on this front as well.

Stay tuned for more legislative adventures ahead.

All the best.

Phil Rosenberg