**Notes & Minutes**

**PEF Region 8 IT Committee – Zoom Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, 1/26/2022 - 6:00PM – 7:30PM

Jim Desso & Mario Chiarello – Committee Co-Chairs

Danielle Bridger -Region 8 Coordinator

**@ high point 45 Participants**

**Go Around/Introductions:**

6:05PM – Call to Order

* Jim Desso – Not in attendance, Excused.
* Mario gave a brief introduction to new attendees and introduced Rene Shekerjian.
* Mario requested volunteers for taking minutes.
* Danielle requested that participants identify themselves upon entry to the meeting.

**Discuss/Approve Agenda:**

6:08PM – A motion to approve the agenda as provided was made by Danielle Bridger, seconded by Jennifer Ocasio. Carried.

**Rene Shekerjian: PEF Civil Service Department – Selective Certification Process:**

* Rene Shekerjian gave a brief introduction and provided an overview of how the Selective Certification Process is used by Management to fill positions.
* Rene also shared the following regarding the Selective Certification Process:
  + Each available position goes through exam planning that includes what exam topics are covered, a Selective Certification component, relevant training and any skills/experience that could be applicable to the position.
  + Potential candidates complete “Skills Inventories” that are part of a Selection Profile. Up to 30 items can be placed in these Profiles and each item is Pass/Fail. If a potential candidate has some of these items but not all, they may not qualify. This process can potentially make a list that has many people on it, only applicable to a very few.
  + There have been previous cases filed regarding Selective Certification that are currently being reviewed with the assistance of Legal.
  + The lists generated for positions are Statewide, and while they appear to have many candidates on them, a Survey is generated and sent that filters out many candidates by Geographical area. This generates a Canvass that goes to the available candidates.
    - If someone takes an appointment off another list, they aren’t de-activated on this list. When a Canvass is generated, they are still reachable, but may decline, making the number of Canvasses sent to potential candidates much higher, creating misleading information about who is available.
* Rene was able to look at the Eligible list and Appointment lists and suspects the use of Selective Certification because some were appointed with lower scores than those who are still on the list with higher scores.
  + While Rene’s research on this topic continues to be a “work in progress”, several documents have been FOILed in efforts to obtain an understanding of current and past practice when utilizing the Selective Certification Process to fill positions.
* The PEF staff (Steve Connolly) letter to GOER from years ago was mentioned that raised the issue of Selective Certification process being abused to circumvent Merit & Fitness. A memo was issued by management to agencies warning against abuses. [Action Item]
* Members suspect that Selective Certification has been abused to allow management to select targeted candidates. A letter from PEF staff (Steve Connolly) regarding these concerns was sent, and as a result, a set of rules was later sent to Agencies to not abuse this process.
  + **Action Item:** Follow up on this at the next meeting and re-share the letter and memo.
  + During COVID, Selective Certification has slowed down. With the cases happening less frequently, and many changes due to COVID, the data collected in 2016/2017 may no longer be current. Rene has FOILed some of this information and is continuing to research this.
* **Questions:** 
  + Question: When there is a posting and Selective Certification is used, do eligible candidates get to see the profile?
    - Answer: A Selective Certification Profile is only available to Hiring managers and HR. A potential candidate can access their Inventory every 6 months and revise it. When a position is filled from the Eligible List, a canvass letter is sent. To bypass the Eligible list, a job posting will be made. In these cases, the requirements don’t conform to the title. Selective Certification is used to determine who gets the Canvass letters. When a Canvass letter is sent, there is no description of what they are looking for. On the posting, there is no indication of criteria used or how you are selected.
  + Question: Are there only 30 items that can be selected per person in Inventory?
    - Answer: It is difficult to pinpoint validity on the Inventory since there is a lot of room for generalization. HR and Hiring Managers are also not involved in the validation of experience and do not have a way of disqualifying candidates. Mario states that this is a problem that has been discussed, and discussion can continue in future meetings. Mario also expressed a need for members to be more aware of how to answer these questions.
  + Question: There are many trainings/certifications that are on the Inventory that are either expensive or there is no training currently available for these. Many people who were once certified have retired. Would it be possible to offer a training every other year or every 3 years for these certifications?
    - Answer: See discussion below regarding UDEMY.
  + Question: Did ITS collect postings? **Action Item:**
    - Answer: While postings are still being used at times to target the person and not the position, it is believed that ITS did collect and review some of these postings previously. **Action Item:** Mario will follow up with the Stewards to confirm this.
  + Question: When there is a vacancy, does ITS notify their employees?
    - Answer: The postings are either made available internally, or on the StateJobs website.
* Mario thanks Rene for his presentation/time/participation and attention to these concerns and encourages participants to put any questions in the chat.
* **Action Item:** Officers, Stewards and Members are encouraged to watch for any instances or job postings where Selective Certification might be used in any of the Agencies and send them in for review and potential future FOIL requests.

**Telecommuting Initiatives – Danielle Bridger:**

* There is an ongoing initiative to encourage HR to allow more than 50% Telecommuting as much as possible. Some areas are already able to do this as they are independently elected officials.
* Some Agencies are not in favor of more than 50% Telecommuting as there is a perception that continuing to Telecommute negatively impacts the local businesses surrounding State Office Buildings.
* Efforts have been made to support a Telecommuting Bill, but involvement in this borders on bargaining agreements and labor management discussions.
* PEF continues to distribute N95 masks to the Membership.
* Danielle encouraged continuation of Labor Management Meetings to discuss issues and access the tools available on PEF’s website.
* Members have expressed concern that Reasonable Accommodations are not being processed in a timely manner, and in some cases, are expiring before a renewal is in place.
* MOA: “Telecommuting in New York State Agencies” in 2019-2023 Contract P. 197
* Some Agencies have re-instated Contact Tracing in their offices.
* The amount of time someone is allowed (10 days for most titles) to remain Quarantined after testing positive, was also discussed.

**Return to Work Directives – Danielle Bridger**

* Return to Work Directives continue to remain fluid, and we are at “Return to Work (change Work to Office)” right now.

**IT Test Update:**

* There are concerns regarding the GR23 – ITS 3 Exam because the test was scheduled and then not held due to COVID-19. The question of receiving the ITS Exam Schedule continues to be raised with ITS Management as exams for other titles have resumed.
* Many Members have expressed that they wish to receive a refund due to the uncertainty surrounding the scheduling of the exam. Civil Service is currently holding a credit for employees for the next test that is given, but there are questions/concerns regarding retirees and those who are no longer eligible to take the exam.
* **Action Item:** Add discussion of this to the next Meeting Agenda as a topic to speak with Rene to clarify for those who are not able to take the exam.

**Exam Training and Preparation:**

* Historically, Stewards/Officers have put together several training sessions for Members for their upcoming ITS Exams. Training Sessions and Study Groups will be available again prior to the next set of Exams.

**Online Training Courses:**

* Over the past year, Jim and Mario have been working on an initiative to leverage online training courses. Offering these courses to Members would mitigate Management’s excuse of contracting out for skills that they state our members don’t have when they are needed.
* There have been conversations with UDEMY, who offers over 5,000 courses, and many are IT-related. They are working with other divisions to obtain interest in purchasing licenses since the more licenses we can contract for would lower the per-license costs.
* ITS has previously offered training courses through Lynda.com, but this is no longer available.

**Questions:**

* Regarding the ITS GR23 Exam:
  + Question: C\_– With the possibility of people moving or retiring, is there any information currently on when the test will be given?
    - Answer: Some Exams are being scheduled by Civil Service. IT exams are expected to be scheduled. OSC has been able to have tests scheduled on-site for exams that are for titles exclusive to OSC.
  + Question: N\_ Is the format of the test being changed due to COVID? Will it be Physical/In-Person or Online?
    - Answer: There has not been a response regarding the format of the tests at this time. Due to ITS being widespread across the State, School Districts have historically held these tests, but are not at this time because of COVID. President Spence has been pursuing the possibility of leveraging SUNY and CUNY schools as an alternative as there are concerns regarding recruitment, retention and a lack of promotions that are being caused by this exam not being given.
* J\_ Regarding Maximizing Telecommuting – requesting a meeting offline to discuss management stipulating differences between work sites. Danielle provided her contact info.

**New Business:**

* L\_ Thanked the Committee for the meeting invitation this evening and for raising awareness of the Committee.
* Mario thanked all for attending and encourages Members to reach out to others. “Let’s work together and make things better.”

7:40PM – Meeting Adjourned.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, 2/24/2022 – 6:00PM.**

Minutes prepared by: Jennifer Ocasio