

**Benefits Focus Group Minutes
(4/07/04)
(In attendance, alphabetically listed)**

<u>Regular Members</u>	<u>Alternate Members</u>	<u>Staff Advisors</u>	<u>Recorder</u>
John Agen	Pamela Christian	Robert Blinch-Edwards	Diane Vanderwest
Janice Cox	Joyce Dolan	Linda McKinney	
Gil Fernandez	Jim Godshall		
Dolly Gamble	Nancy Meskimen		
John Glanden	Joe Munyak		
Pat Horan	William Tatum		
Casey Humpert			
Karen Lusk			
Susan Merritt			
Dick Minster			
Stacey Monroe			
Benita Saldutti			
Louise Van Pelt			
Ed Whitehead			

Call to Order- Chairperson

John Agen called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., April 7, 2004.

Roll Call

Diane Vanderwest called the roll. A sign in sheet was also circulated for those attending the meeting not called on the attendance list. Some members arrived after roll call, but were added to attendee list above. The follow people also were in attendance and signed the sheet that was passed around: Toni Welicki, Kim DeNais, Al Woodle, Bob Conley, Ken Yahraus and Robert McLeod.

John Agen turned the meeting over to Co-Chair, Benita Saldutti since he was not present at the last couple of meetings.

Approval of Minutes

Benita Saldutti called for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Minutes from the March 3rd, 2004, meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Wellness Proposal – Linda McKinney

Linda McKinney advised Kurt proposed a budget for FY 2004-2005 that included a total of \$88,900 for the Wellness Proposal: \$29,000 Diabetes Management, \$28,600 Wellness Fund, \$15,000 Health Screening/Health Fair and \$6,300 Wellness Communications. No other suggestions were received; therefore this is the amount that was asked for in the budget, going forward.

Dick Minster asked Linda McKinney about a proposal to be presented today to the City Commission in a closed-door meeting that would require employees and retirees to pay a percentage of their pay as a premium for our health care system and wanted to hear comments about that proposal. Linda advised that there is an out of sunshine meeting, but did not know what the final proposals or agenda would be. When asked further, Linda advised that Mr. Hoverter did have discussions with the PBA, through the negotiating process, about the potential of a contribution. She could not answer regarding retirees because the PBA does not negotiate for retirees. Linda advised that the PBA had rejected this proposal and has declared an impasse.

Benita Saldutti asked if this out of sunshine meeting today will only discuss active police officers or if it will discuss retirees as well. Linda did not know, but in her opinion retirees could come up in the brainstorming area, where a lot of options or concerns could be discussed relating to the PBA contract, but did not know for sure. Linda said that when you go before the commission, in sunshine or out of sunshine, it is staff's obligation to present different options, and discussing options and supporting options are two different things.

John Glanden said he's "had a lot of discussion outside of this meeting from many, many people and you'll find the audience is probably here for this reason and I'm disappointed that we don't get any answers from it because it's a very large issue. It's not just a little thing to any of us because I can guarantee you that if there is ever a cost involved to our insurance, it will not stay at that rate for more than just a year or two. It will go up and it's very much of a problem and I'm disappointed that you (Linda) don't have answers and am very disappointed that Hoverter isn't here to give us some answers. I think that's a very poor way of running a ship. You want to sink it and it's not going to be a good deal."

Linda advised that she understood, but I don't think that it's fair to put Mr. Hoverter on the line. He doesn't make the decisions. The group he's meeting with this afternoon has to give us the focus and guidance, going forward and the people that will finally pass on any proposal are the commissioners. And, therefore, to start talking about something when we don't know what they will or will not support, doesn't make a lot of sense.

John Glanden expressed that it makes a lot of sense to know what's going on and felt that Linda would know the answer, or that Mr. Hoverter would as he is the man who represents the City when he's here and therefore he should have that answer.

Linda understood and advised that "after today's meeting, it will probably be clearer, but for the HR dept. and staff to give you an answer without checking and making sure what our marching orders are, going forward, doesn't make a lot of sense. That's opinion, that's brainstorming, that's concept and there has to be a little bit more clarity otherwise people start reacting to "what-if's" and rumors and that isn't fair until we have some facts put together. So John, it's not like I'm trying to avoid, I don't think anyone would accuse me of being less than fairly frank, but I also can't make up what my opinion is to have it be fact. Does it make sense that we would check with the commission before we starting going around saying what about or what do you think? Does that make sense?"

John Glanden expressed that he thought the City does know something because this is not a new thing. It's been here for months.

A member of audience asked if they are going to hold a special meeting to fill us in on any of this after their meeting or if everybody is just going to sit on this till next month and let all the rumors get started again.

Benita Saldutti called for a meeting next Wednesday where we can get a report back. Linda McKinney agreed that would be more than fair but that it was unknown if that was feasible.

Linda advised, “for all I know Benita, they could come out and could say this is what we’re going to do. I would be surprised if that’s how the City Manager would want anything communicated with the employees as a whole. He’s never done it that way in the past. And you’ve had meetings with him, in and out of the sunshine and you know that’s usually not how he manages so I wouldn’t think that would be how he would want to manage it this time.”

John Glanden noted that the commission can have a meeting out of sunshine to discuss labor contracts and so forth, they are not allowed to vote on anything, they are not allowed to do any other issues because that’s the law and Linda agreed.

Benita Saldutti reiterated by emphasizing John’s point stating, “if retirees are not covered by a labor union, then I would be a little dismayed to find that retirees are discussed in that meeting.” Linda advised that a reason that topic will be discussed is because the PBA did ask Mr. Hoverter at the last table what was our decision going to be going forward with any, as far as what was on the table, regarding retirees, because that would effect the current, active members that would then transition into retirees. We could not, as staff, answer. The proposal was a 3-yr proposal with changes in 2nd year, but the changes were also tied into a wage package and a few other things. And again, if I knew it, I’d tell you ok. I wasn’t at the table. I just knew the general outline of the package.”

Linda advised that she will have no problem stating what the group expectations are and sharing that with Mr. Hoverter..

John Agen also made it clear that he wanted to have a meeting for next Wednesday at 1:00 here in this room or wherever you can get it scheduled and would like to invite Mr. McNees and Mr. Hoverter to be present so that we can dispel some of these rumors that are being established here as well as keeping anything further from mustering. John said, “it’s obvious from those that are showing at this meeting, there’s enough rumor going on right now for the need to meet at city hall to get together. One of the reasons for getting this focus group together was to have good, congenial relations with the City, both in the area of retirees and active personnel for the City of Sarasota. We spent an awful lot of time developing what we have. I would like to see it continue along the road that it has and put these rumors to bed once and for all.”

Linda agreed and understood his position and the group’s position on the matter of wanting to have a clarifying meeting.

Dolly Gamble said Mr. McNees may already have an appointment for 1:00 next Wednesday and that it would be kind of unfair to assume he’s going to be here.

It was agreed to either have Mr. McNees present or have his representative attend and to schedule the meeting as soon as possible, baring any conflicts.

Benita Saldutti said she would like for it to be communicated to Mr. Hoverter that a large number of people certainly do not agree with any kind of plan to impose a cost to retirees for their medical coverage. Linda advised that she felt confident that Mr. Hoverter understands that.

Bob McLeod stood up and spoke for firefighters saying any attempt to put a premium on our health insurance will be protested very vehemently. Linda McKinney said she had memories of a few years ago of conversations along that line and has shared those conversations with Mr. Hoverter.

Joyce Dolan mentioned that last summer or spring, there was a meeting over in the Public Works Dept. and there was also a motion that was made that any cost attached to retirees insurance would make our contract that we started to work with null and void. Every person, except for one, voted in favor of no cost attached to our medical and it's in the meetings of the focus group and advised that Linda was there and that Kurt hadn't taken over yet. There were just as many people that were after '93 as before '93 in the room.

Benita advised that unfortunately, we can vote anything we want to, but we actually have no power. Joyce understood that but it is down on record for the Benefits Focus Group. Benita said that the power that we have is in our numbers to stand together on an issue, but unfortunately, we don't have the authority to institute something.

Mr. McLeod added to you can bet if there is any attempt to put any kind of increase on retirees insurance for firefighters, we will be united in total opposition to it.

Benita thanked Linda for letting us express ourselves on this issue and said she thinks Linda understands our message. Linda finished this subject adding that she hopes that the group has every confidence that she is not shy about sharing the group's feelings and if not to please let her know. No one responded to this. The meeting went on with Mr. Blinch-Edwards.

Health Screenings Update- Robert Blinch-Edwards

First, Robert wanted to announce Healthcare Sarasota was noted in the newspaper as involved in a suit filed by several employers who had insurance from a company HRH (an insurance company in Sarasota). Several employers who had insurance (from a company in NJ called MBI) that went bankrupt, filed the suit. HCS was allowing HRH clients access to HCS network to obtain provider discounts through no benefit by HCS. Robert stated the case is frivolous. It's against HCS and SMHPA. HCS is innocent in this and are bystanders in all of this. Any questions pertaining to this, ask Robert.

John Glanden asked a question about EMI that he read about in AARP magazine. Linda advised it was a different EMI and not ours.

Robert advised the final aggregate results of the health screenings would be at the next meeting.

Robert also distributed a sample of "*Checklist for Your Doctor's Visit*". This was created with approved information the Benefits Focus Group had supplied. Once reviewed, Robert will have them printed and distributed to employees and their dependants as soon as possible.

The Caremark website is now able to provide the costs for various drugs and what the City pas for the drug on the web page which is www.caremark.com.

Linda McKinney met with Caremark this morning and reviewed prescription procedures stemming from a concerned member's letter.

1. Caremark should no longer be making changes to prescriptions without contacting the member's physician – this was reinforced.

2. Caremark should no longer change the quantity of the drugs without contacting the member's physician- this was reinforced.
3. Caremark should also contact the patient if a change is made to the prescription – so there are no surprises. Most of us don't like surprises and if we can get some warning about something, then we could take some action, we would feel more confident in what was happening. If we are not given notice of a change in a drug, the patient may just take the drug and throw out the information that comes with the drug and not read it. Caremark will send out a letter alerting the member of the change.
4. Caremark's promptness when a member calls in was also addressed.

Robert added about prescription refills (and changes to prescriptions) that if your doctor writes a script and says that it is for 90 days, the number of pills you get will be the protocol for that drug, unless the doctor writes, one every day. For example, for some migraine medicine, you don't take a pill every day and you would get the protocol amount for that pill.

There were some concerns about the timely manner prescriptions are received. Robert explained that if a prescription is changed, there might be a delay in response from your doctor, notifying him of the change. There should never be a delay in getting any daily medication. Call customer service at Caremark immediately and always write down the name of the person you speak to and the time of your call, then it can be tracked. Once received, prescriptions should be filled within 2 weeks.

Robert mentioned a new process with prescriptions. If you send in the request too early, it will not be sent back to you, but will be kept and filled at the proper time. Caremark will send a confirmation letter that Caremark has received the request, but it was too early and they were going to hold on to it. If you have issues about getting your prescriptions, put it in writing and advise Linda McKinney for help in resolving any concerns.

Other Business:

Linda McKinney advised that Kurt Hoverter will introduce the Diabetes Management program that was excellently presented at the last meeting. The wording for the Diabetes program for next year's budget was finalized. Mr. Hoverter will present it and how to communicate the program at a future meeting.

Closing comment on today's topic earlier:

Linda McKinney realizes that any change in the health plan does get everybody upset and anxious and before we do this (get upset and anxious) that we have facts first—until there is something concrete, just wait till there is something factual to address.

There was an audience comment that nobody likes surprises (like Linda said) and you hear rumors and you want to know and don't want to be surprised by waiting and there are avenues for complaints. The unknown is more stressful for people.

Benita Saldutti advised that we want to get our position out before decisions are made, because they're harder to be changed, but we can influence them before they are made. Linda advised that she understood but we have to get the concrete facts first.

D/C Whitehead spoke up to "clear things up a little. A proposal was made to the PBA (not rumor) and Mr. McNees said we have "one plan" if this proposal to the PBA is approved that we have one plan, it then bonds everybody. We are acting on a history established by C/M and that is one plan and we are acting on a

proposal that was set forth to the bargaining unit to accept this plan for your members as part of a bargaining package, which would then mean that there is a possibility that it will go in and apply to every one else, so we need to be up front with this and keep an eye on this and the purpose of this group was to open a dialogue and also to get some changes into our health care system that would go ahead and benefit the City, the employees, the retirees, the people in the system have made some big sacrifices over the past couple of years to go ahead and bring down the cost of health care or mitigate the cost of health care and the group's reason for getting together was to make recommendations on changes and to have input. We are not just acting on rumors, or jumping the gun, we are acting on information that was given to us. We are acting on past practices of the City and we are making our feelings known, which is the purpose of this Benefits Focus Group."

Linda advised that she didn't disagree with that and invited D/C Whitehead to stay after the meeting.

John Glanden agreed with the one plan and never more than one plan. Adding that whatever the PBA negotiates, the others will get, we'll all live with and have no input to, but yet what happens will influence you.

Linda agreed saying history bears it out adding in any kind of a negotiation there are a lot of things put on the table that don't come to fruition. John agreed with this.

Linda added, that "if we reacted to everything that was put on the table as fact and finality that's a long way off and the C/M yes, can say one plan and has said one plan, I don't think I have heard the commission as a group say one plan and they are the ones that make the final decision. I like dealing with facts and finalities, not brain-storming issues. It's hard for me to respond to brain-stormed issues."

Pamela Christian agreed that facts are important; however, the problem is that the facts have not been communicated to the employees and retirees. Because of the unknown facts, the fear is that the concerns of employees and retirees are not being properly represented to the Commission. Like Benita said, items conveyed to the Commission by administration can become a reality, which at this time, those items remain unknown to employees and retirees. The reason employees and retirees are talking among themselves in group-like settings, is because the administration is not communicating these known facts.

Linda McKinney agreed, but said for us to present it to the employees without the approval of upper management and the commission doesn't seem like the most pragmatic approach.

D/C Whitehead said "I don't think anybody's presenting it to the employees, Linda, I think everybody's here to make sure that the Benefits Focus Group represents the interest of the employees to the administration. That's what I hear going on here today."

Linda McKinney said "that's why I asked before, if anyone has any concerns about my ability to be frank and forthright with your opinions, to speak up. That's one of the reasons I brought that up D/C so that it would be on the table.

Benita in closing said we look forward to having a meeting next week, if it can be arranged and scheduled.

Linda: Do not speculate what we are or are not getting and do not speculate what the PBA will or will not do.

John Agen commented that the first day of the Focus Group start, C/M was there and expressed his desires and wants out of the group. Through the years we have fulfilled those wants and desires and now have our desires to be kept up on thoughts, such as today's discussion. John Agen understood that there are certain things the C/M cannot discuss, but the C/M does take this information to the commission for certification for the funds to be utilized and also as his recommendation to the city commission on how to progress. Agen said it is proper courtesy for the C/M to make every effort (or his representative that can speak for him) to be present next week, because, we are dedicating our time and effort to this. We want to be kept in the know.

Linda McKinney said she recognized that, but whether the meeting could be scheduled at 1:00 next Wednesday she could not confirm, but we would communicate when the meeting could be scheduled as soon as possible.

Pat Horan asked if that motion that she spoke of earlier that had been made several months ago, could that be a part of it too, because that was a mixed group of active employees and retirees, before and after '93.

Benita said we have presented our message and didn't know that the motion will solidify that any more than we already have here today.

Toni Welicki presented Linda McKinney with some questions she had concerning our 73 page book of the plan description of our benefits. Linda advised that she would provide answers either verbally or in writing, whichever Toni preferred

Adjournment and Next Meeting

Benita Saldutti adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

NOTE: After BFG Meeting today, April 7, C/M McNees sent out a memo to everyone on the subject of Medical/Dental Coverage. This memo advised the commission instructed Mr. McNees to schedule a workshop during the summer to discuss benefits. It is his desire that we all have an opportunity to be involved in this process and have options regarding our benefits. A copy of this memo is attached for reference.

The next meeting is 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 5, 2004, in Room #100 of the Federal Building.

/dv

Minutes Approved: _____

John Agen, Chairperson, or
Benita Saldutti, Acting Chairperson

Attachment to minutes of 4-7-04

Michael McNees

Sent by: Carolyn Hereford

04/12/2004 04:12 PM

To: Everyone

cc:

Subject: Medical/Dental Coverage

To: All Employees and Retirees

From: Michael A. McNees, City Manager

Subject: Medical/Dental Coverage

Concern has risen again regarding potential changes to the medical/dental plan. As you know, the study of our wage and benefit market positioning has been an ongoing topic. I am also concerned since we all have a vested interest in the benefit plans and the continued financial viability of these plans. A topic of this importance should be addressed with a long-term view in mind.

The Commission has instructed me to schedule a workshop during the summer to discuss our long-range strategy for employment at the City. A key component of that discussion will be our benefits and how they fit into the employment package at the City of Sarasota.

It is my desire that, as employees and retirees, we all have an opportunity to be involved in this process and have options regarding our benefits.

Look for subsequent communications from my office regarding the date for this workshop.