

BOSSIER PARISH POLICE JURY
POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES

Mr. Doug Rimmer, Chairman
November 20, 2024

The Policy and Procedures Committee of the Bossier Parish Police Jury met on this 20th day of November, 2024, at 11:53 a.m., in the Police Jury Conference Room, Bossier Parish Courthouse, Benton, Louisiana. Mr. Doug Rimmer, Chairman, called the meeting to order, with the following members present:

Mr. Doug Rimmer, Chairman, Mr. Glenn Benton, Mr. Jimmy Cochran, Mr. Julian Darby, Ms. Pam Glorioso, Mr. John Ed Jordan, Mr. Chris Marsiglia, Ms. Julianna Parks, Mr. Philip Rodgers, Mr. Tom Salzer, and Mr. Keith Sutton.

Others present for the meeting:

Ms. Metra Ardoin

Ms. Carlotta Askew-Brown

Ms. Carolina Blunck

Ms. Ashley Ezell

Ms. Stacie Fernandez

Mr. Kevin Gay

Ms. Julie Gill

Ms. Monica Grappe

Mr. Eric Hudson

Mr. Patrick Jackson

Mr. Heath Lyles

Ms. Vickie Meek

Ms. Megan Ramos

Mr. Matt Redmon

Dr. Ken Ward

Ms. Lisa Wilson

Dr. Ken Ward, Assistant Parish Administrator, stated that a copy of the proposed Policy No. 240, revising Performance Evaluations and Salary Increases, has been provided to the committee for review. He stated that during the recent Finance Committee Budget Workshop, there was discussion regarding the parish policies for employee evaluation and merit increases, and the proposed changes to the current policy are presented today for consideration. He further stated that he developed this policy based on recommendations made during the budget workshop, and advised that copies have been circulated to some jurors, as well as directors within the police jury.

Dr. Ward stated that the proposed revisions create accountability not only for each employee, but also the supervisors, directors and administration. He stated that the proposed policy includes the addition of a new comment section on the evaluation form, which allows for employee feedback during the evaluation process. He further stated that going forward, the administration will sign off on every evaluation and merit increase so that employees' voices are heard at the highest level of administration. Dr. Ward stated that if employees have a concern, this will allow the administration to be aware, and provides another layer of accountability for supervisors and directors to be aware of employee concerns. He stated that when merit increases are given, he

expects to see some higher and some lower, with a bell curve developing. He further stated that for those employees consistently receiving lower percentages, this new system will allow for that to be addressed in employee coaching, or potential termination.

Dr. Ward stated that in his first six months, he has had many conversations with employees and has found that most desire more accountability from their supervisors and directors, and to be fairly reviewed and compensated during evaluations. He stated that the biggest change for supervisors and directors is that this new system requires the evaluation of all employees of each department during the same time period at the end of every year, beginning this December. He stated that for those employees hired during the year, they will also be evaluated during annual evaluations and eligible for at least half of the total merit increase awarded for the year. He further stated this plan covers all employees and allows both supervisors and directors to view employee progress yearly at a set period, in lieu of evaluating employees separately throughout the year, which will provide a fairer evaluation process for all employees.

Dr. Ward stated that he has provided guidance for the review process for supervisors and directors and has plans to roll out training in December to assist the staff in conducting and completing the evaluations. He stated that he will review the first round of test evaluations to ensure that these new guidelines are understood prior to supervisors and directors sitting down with employees in January. He further stated that this will allow administration the ability to review proposed merit increases for accuracy, and will also provide a first look at the potential bell curve formation of scores and merit increases. Dr. Ward stated that if these proposed changes are approved, he expects this process to begin in December, advising that he will review evaluations and proposed merit increases with supervisors and directors to make any necessary adjustments, with all merit increases included on the first payroll for February 2025.

Dr. Ward stated that evaluations can still be done anytime throughout the year, to give either positive or negative feedback. He stated that the new policy allows for all employees to be evaluated at least once each year.

Mr. Patrick Jackson, Parish Attorney, asked if there has been a review of the parish organizational chart to ensure who will evaluate employees. He stated that Mr. Kevin Gay, Public Works Director, has a large number of employees and asked if he is tasked with evaluating all staff, or if foremen and supervisors will handle evaluations for his review and comments. Dr. Ward stated that he believes foremen may be best suited to conduct employee evaluations for the

highway department, with review by Mr. Gay prior to evaluations being provided to employees. He stated that evaluations are an important part of an employee's progression in their career and advised that he believes directors must be involved in each step of the process to ensure staff are evaluated fairly. He further stated that the addition of employee comments and administration approvals allows for an added layer of accountability and ensures a fair process for all.

Dr. Ward stated that another item discussed during the budget workshop involves the salary study findings. He stated that he has met with Ms. Lisa Wilson, Human Resources Director, as well as the company who completed the study, to become familiar with its contents. He further stated that he believes the salary study and salary bands should be a living document, in that they should adjust with cost-of-living increases.

Dr. Ward stated that the salary study was completed with data from 2021 and advised that the current salary bands are also from 2021. He stated that 3% increases have been given in the last two years but advised that the bands were not adjusted. He further stated that we need to explore awarding a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) periodically to keep the bands current. Dr. Ward stated that the revised policy presented today allows for a COLA percentage to be given by awarding it to the employees or by adjusting the bands without giving employees a percentage adjustment. He stated that he is not a fan of utilizing tax dollars on studies and would rather see that investment go to the employees, advising that the salary study cost in 2021 was \$85,000. He further stated that studies have a normal life span of seven to 10 years, without merit or COLA adjustments, and advised that the cost for this type of study has likely increased to \$100,000 today. Dr. Ward stated that he believes those dollars are best spent not on a study but invested in our employees by adjusting the salary bands strategically, as needed.

Ms. Julianna Parks asked if it is only possible to adjust the bands by giving a COLA, or if we can increase the bands annually without awarding a COLA. She stated that the bands may need to be adjusted due to cost of living changes without the necessity of awarding a percentage adjustment to all employees. Dr. Ward stated that the policy is now written to allow for those adjustments both by a salary study, and by decision of parish administration. He stated that it is important to look after not only the employee salary bands, but also taxpayer dollars. He further stated that he believes these adjustments are necessary so there is no need to request an additional \$100,000 salary study in the future due to not adjusting our bands as needed.

Ms. Parks stated that she does not believe any juror is opposed to raising the salary bands

even at the highest grades and advised that the prospect of increases for those whose pay is already outside of the bands is the main issue. Dr. Ward stated that there are 18 employees currently situated above their grade and advised that bands should be adjusted so those employees have the opportunity to receive merit increases and COLA adjustments. He stated that those employees who are currently over their grade are not eligible for merit increases.

Mr. Philip Rodgers stated that in the time since the salary study was completed, his concern remains that it has not been managed. He stated that those employees who work hard for the parish should be rewarded accordingly, and those who do not, should not receive five to six percent increases annually. Mr. Glenn Benton stated that employee evaluations should be utilized to award, or not award, merit increases accordingly. Mr. Rodgers stated that if evaluations are used correctly, he agrees with the need for cost-of-living adjustments and increases to the bands as needed. He stated that salary caps are in place to ensure that no one is paid more than the job grade allows. Ms. Parks stated that jurors are responsible for taxpayer dollars and advised that we must protect public funds when considering merit increases and COLA adjustments. She stated that even the best employees will move on if all employees are rewarded equally without regard for work performance. Mr. John Ed Jorden stated that he agrees with Dr. Ward that funds used towards a salary study should instead be invested in employees.

Dr. Ward stated that during annual budget considerations, he believes salary increases should be included in the next year's budget for consideration by the jury and advised that the revised policy assigns the duty of overseeing those annual increases to the administration. He stated that he believes merit increases must be given annually, and if the budget allows for a COLA increase, that decision can be presented to the jury for consideration. He further stated that with these policy updates, the jury will determine whether the budget?? increases are given and the parish administration will be responsible for determining amounts.

Mr. Rimmer asked for clarification on the procedure for adjusting the salary bands without merit increases. Dr. Ward stated that we have three percent in the budget this year for salary increases and advised that he would like to establish one percent towards a COLA increase to the salary bands with the remaining two percent towards merit increases. He stated that directors will have an average of two percent for merit increases to distribute as they see fit, advising that some employees could receive a three percent increase while others receive one or zero percent merit increase depending on their evaluation and job performance. He further stated that each department

will have a two percent budget to utilize as they determine for merit increases. In response to Mr. Rimmer's question, Dr. Ward stated that if the new policy is approved, he will begin work in December to complete evaluations in January. He stated that he envisions COLA increases given on the first payroll of January 2025, with merit increases given on the first payroll of February 2025.

Mr. Jackson stated that one steady complaint he has received from jurors over the last five years is that as merit increases are given, essentially every employee receives a merit increase which equates it to a COLA increase across the board. He stated that if an increase is dependent on an evaluation, supervisors and directors have struggled to be harsh in the written evaluations of their staff. He further stated this is not unique to the police jury, advising that every field experiences these same problems. Mr. Jackson stated that the military even revised its evaluation system to an electronic format, with the highest percentage called top block, which will only allow a set number of staff to receive the highest percentages. He stated that once a supervisor awards his or her set number of top block ratings, the system will not allow any more to be given during that evaluation cycle. He further stated that every supervisor wants to be the good guy who gives top block to all staff to help with career advancement.

Mr. Jackson asked Dr. Ward if restricting the budget for merit increases to two percent and giving supervisors the authority to administer that budget within their department will prevent these situations of everyone getting the maximum amount available. Dr. Ward stated that he previously oversaw a department of 100, where he utilized this procedure for ten years. He stated that he was also skeptical that a supervisor can balance a percentage of budget for merit increases but advised that he has ten years of data and experience that it can, and does, work. He further stated that in order for the process to work, supervisors must be held accountable. Dr. Ward stated that by the first week of January, he expects to see a list from each department with the proposed merit increases for each employee. He stated that a two percent increase straight down the list is unacceptable and he expects to see a range of zero to three percent increases in every department. He further stated that those tough decisions must be made, and supervisors and directors must be held accountable to make these decisions.

Ms. Parks stated that part of each supervisor's evaluation can be a rating according to their supervisory capabilities in balancing the merit increase budget. Dr. Ward stated that part of the supervisor's evaluation form considers how they handle those situations. Ms. Parks asked if it also

takes into consideration how their employees are performing. Dr. Ward stated that each of those things is considered in supervisor evaluations. Mr. Tom Salzer stated that when he looked into the evaluation and merit increase process, he had similar concerns.

Mr. Rimmer stated that he believes this proposal is fair and reminded jurors that the parish administrator is also evaluated annually by the police jury president. Dr. Ward stated that every member of the staff will now have accountability for their job duties, including supervisors and directors. He advised that at any time, we should be able to pull evaluations to view employee progression and subsequent merit increases. Mr. Salzer stated that evaluations operate much like speed limit signs in that speed limits must be enforced by issuing citations to control speed and similarly, evaluations must be performed to determine merit increases.

Mr. Rimmer stated that a recommendation will be made by the committee in the regular meeting to adopt the proposed changes to Policy No. 240.

Dr. Ward stated that a proposed revision to Policy No. 770 is presented today for consideration, which strikes out the processing fee of \$25.00 per public records request. Mr. Rimmer stated that this will be a separate item to vote in today's regular meeting.

Ms. Parks suggested that a revision is needed in Policy No. 240, under the Compensation heading at paragraph A.2. to state "When an applicant is extremely qualified and would immediately benefit the Bossier Parish Police Jury and otherwise receive a higher wage in the private sector the candidate may be offered a starting salary and benefit package higher than the entry labor grade of the job description." She stated that it is well known that employees will accept a lower wage with the better benefits offered by government positions. Dr. Ward stated that a revision to the vacation policy was recently made to allow for an increase in vacation hours offered in lieu of additional pay in certain circumstances. Ms. Parks stated that when considering that a prospective employee could earn higher wages in the private sector, benefits must also be considered in that decision.

Mr. Rodgers stated he believes Ms. Parks is ensuring that it is known that even though government jobs may not have salaries that compete with private sector jobs, the benefits offered often make up the difference in wages. He stated that he believes in recruiting the best, most qualified candidates for every position. Ms. Parks stated that vacation time and retirement are part of the attractive benefits that most in the job market desire. The jurors discussed retirement benefits

available to parish employees. Dr. Ward stated that he will include this updated language in Policy No. 240.

Mr. Rimmer asked if there are any other questions regarding Policy No. 770, Public Records Requests. Ms. Askew-Brown stated that her office is inundated with calls and requests for records that must be heavily researched and pulled from their warehouse. She stated that very often, once the work is completed, the requestor never calls back to pay or retrieve the records. She asked if there is a way to require a deposit for those situations. Mr. Jackson stated that the police jury office also receives many records requests and advised that he takes a hyper-technical review of each request to provide only the documents which are requested. He stated that the office averages approximately three to five requests per day, and it is a staff time grinder which requires an employee to visit ten other departments for records and conduct a search through paper and electronic records.

Mr. Jackson stated that in many cases, this prevents an employee from working on an exhaustive research project for each request. He stated that he can work with the MPC office to help with these issues. He further stated that the problem with public records requests is that if he gets the answer wrong, sanctions can be ordered against the parish. Mr. Jackson stated that lawyers must be involved with every public records request to ensure proper compliance but advised that he must depend on staff to verify with any applicable department whether there are any responsive records contained in each. He stated that the processing fee failed due to the numerous requests to waive fees accompanying public records requests and advised we have decided to remove it from the policy.

Mr. Rimmer asked if there is anything we can do about those who request documents but never pick up the requested documents. Mr. Jackson stated that for those situations, he advises the number of pages of documents responsive and requires a corresponding deposit for that number of pages. He stated the cost of paper is much less than the cost of actual employee time spent on these requests. He further stated that there is a three-day trigger on public records requests, and they often come in on Friday afternoon, leaving a response due by Monday. Mr. Jackson stated that there are those in the community who will file suit if a timely response is not received. Ms. Parks stated that there is also no limit on the number of records requests any one person can make. Mr. Jackson agreed with Ms. Parks and advised Ms. Askew-Brown that he will assist her office with guidance on public records request procedures.

Mr. Rimmer stated that a list of conferences, holidays and proposed meeting changes has been provided to the committee for review. Mr. Jimmy Cochran asked what holiday is celebrated on October 14, 2025, as noted on the calendar. Ms. Megan Ramos, Interim Parish Secretary, stated that Ms. Ashley Ezell, Assistant Parish Secretary, and she have compiled a list of proposed meeting changes to ensure all meetings are properly scheduled in advance and there is no confusion during the year. She stated that the calendar is a reference for the list provided and advised that the proposed rescheduling of three meetings is due to conferences and events.

Mr. Salzer clarified that Mr. Cochran is referencing a holiday marked on October 13th but not on the list provided. Ms. Wilson stated that October 13th was marked by mistake, and it will be corrected on the final calendar.

Mr. Chris Marsiglia stated that it has been discussed previously to eliminate either Bossier Day at the Capitol or Police Jury Association of Louisiana (PJAL) day at the Capitol, as those events typically occur close in dates. Mr. Rodgers stated that both events are beneficial to the parish and advised that some jurors attend Bossier Day while others attend PJAL Day. Mr. Keith Sutton stated he believes it was left up to the jurors to decide which event to attend. Mr. Salzer stated that it was a personal decision for him to attend one but not the other, as they are only a week apart, and meetings are with the Louisiana delegation in Baton Rouge for each.

Mr. Rimmer stated that our January meetings will be combined to meet once on January 15, 2025, as the New Year's Day holiday falls on what would be our first meeting on Wednesday, January 1, 2025.

Mr. Jackson asked Dr. Ward to check the 26th Judicial District Court calendar and Governor's calendar regarding the Juneteenth holiday. He stated this has been a recurring issue for observance due to the Governor issuing an executive order for a change in observance. He further asked about the parish observance date. Dr. Ward stated that Juneteenth is written into our policy for observance on the third Friday of June. Ms. Wilson clarified that Juneteenth is recognized by the state as the third Saturday of June, and our policy is to observe Saturday holidays on the Friday before. Mr. Jackson stated that for the last two years, the governor has issued a separate directive and half of the courthouse has been absent for two days instead of one. He stated that this is not ideal for litigants and those who have business to conduct at the courthouse, for departments to be closed on two separate occasions for the same holiday. He further suggested that we ensure that

the parish is in step with the governor's directive to avoid multiple department closures. Mr. Rimmer stated that in the last two years, the governor has issued a last-minute executive order changing the date.

Mr. Cochran asked if it is possible to go back to the previous policy of observing Juneteenth on the day of the week it falls on the calendar annually. Mr. Jackson stated that is possible, but when the governor issues an executive order to change observance, the clerk of court, district attorney's office, judges' office, and registrar of voters all shut down accordingly. He stated that it is important that we match those offices to avoid multiple closure days. Mr. Salzer asked if it is possible to write our policy to state that we observe whatever the Louisiana Governor declares. Mr. Marsiglia asked if the 2025 observance of Juneteenth has been set by the Governor. Ms. Stacie Fernandez, Parish Treasurer, stated that previously, the observance has been changed at the last minute by executive order.

Dr. Ward suggested the calendar can be adopted today, with the caveat that the Juneteenth holiday will be included at the Governor's direction. Mr. Jackson stated that the problem with adopting the calendar to observe Juneteenth on the third Friday of June is that employees schedule appointments and vacation time around holidays, which causes problems if changed after being adopted. Mr. Rimmer stated that we can keep our policy as it states the holiday is the third Saturday of June but will be adjusted according to the Governor's declaration. Ms. Pam Glorioso stated that the federal government states the holiday is June 19th each year. Ms. Wilson clarified that the Louisiana governor has changed observance by executive order for the last two years. She further stated that we may not know when the state will observe Juneteenth until just prior to issuance of the executive order. Mr. Jackson stated that it may be possible to confirm with the Governor's office when the Juneteenth holiday will be observed in 2025. Dr. Ward stated that he will contact the Governor's office to confirm.

Mr. Rimmer stated that January meetings will be combined to January 15, 2025.

This concluded the meeting of the Policy and Procedures Committee Meeting. The meeting was adjourned by the Chairman at 12:28 p.m.

MEGAN C. RAMOS
INTERIM PARISH SECRETARY

DOUG RIMMER, CHAIRMAN
BOSSIER PARISH POLICE JURY