

Special Meeting of the Civil Service Board

**Present:** Vice-Chair Steve Sanderfer, George L. Allen, Jr., F. Ray Hill, Marvin M. Lane, Jr., Pat Parrish, Alicia Voltmer

**Absent:** Joseph L. Phifer

**Attendees:**

Jason McClain, Assistant City Attorney  
Janice Moss, Senior Assistant City Attorney  
Scott Newland, United Steelworkers Union  
Tanya Oliveria, Assistant City Attorney  
Dan Pedroza, United Steelworkers Union  
Katie Smith, Assistant City Attorney

**Civil Service Department Staff:**

Annabell Chantaca, Human Resource Analyst  
Delphine Duerr, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Janice Favors, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Michelle Hanchard, Assistant Director  
Millie Laird, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Patricia Marsolais, Secretary to the Civil Service Board  
Kimberly Martin, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Pamela McDonald, Manager – Examining and Recruitment Division  
Dawne Payne, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Al Perez, Human Resource Analyst  
Martha Santos, Executive Assistant  
Eddie Thames, Sr. Human Resource Analyst  
Brandy Thomas, Office Assistant  
Joanne Ung, NEOGOV Process Review Manager

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m.

Vice-Chair Sanderfer explained that the subject of the meeting is a discussion with City Manager Mary Suhm to clarify her January 18, 2008 responses to the Civil Service Board's November 7, 2007 questions. A follow-up set of questions was sent to Ms. Suhm on February 7, 2008.

The Vice-Chair stated that the purpose of the meeting is to try and come to a resolution over issues that have been discussed for several months.

The first question focused on security and privacy issues with the NEOGOV system and the risks associated with its configuration. Board member Lane asked Ms. Suhm if she is satisfied with the system and if not, what the City is doing to fix it.

Ms. Suhm expressed her thanks to the Board for inviting her to have the conversation. She believes that most of the problems stem from communication about the system. She emphasized that she has no desire to get rid of Civil Service. She added that it is clear to her that the employees believe in and support Civil Service.

Ms. Suhm indicated that she is not concerned with the access the HR people have to the system. They are the same people that do payroll. If she can't trust them, she needs to fire them.

The Vice-Chair expressed the Board's concern that suddenly the floodgates of people opened having access to private information they do not need access to. One concern was that test scores could be changed. All of this is troubling in a time where identity theft is such a common issue. NEOGOV Process Manager Joanne Ung explained that the ability to change information and not just view it is a primary security concern.

Ms. Suhm reiterated her belief that the noted people must have access to this information in order to do their jobs. If the Board is uncomfortable with this she has already talked with the software manufacturer about creating two portals. That way HR would never touch our work and we would never touch theirs. She said she'd be willing to do that to settle the issue if it's not terribly expensive.

In response to a question from Board member Lane about the cost of separate portals Ms. Suhm said the vendor indicated "not much cost" to do this.

Board member Parrish who has ten years of experience in the applicant tracking area expressed her professional opinion that the City has the wrong applicant tracking system for its needs. Ms. Parrish added that her research showed that NEOGOV does not have a "read-only" feature.

NEOGO Process Review Manager Joanne Ung agrees that a technological split is possible but other issues will arise in doing so. Procedures will have to be defined a lot better to make sure that both sides are doing what they need to do correctly.

Board member Lane expressed how pleased he was to hear the City Manager said publicly that she's not trying to get rid of or transfer Civil Service elsewhere. He referenced two presentations in 2005 to the City Council, in which the Human Resource Director David Etheridge stated that this was the case. City Council was asked to transfer testing, validation, uniform and civilian recruiting, application processing and background checking. The City Council took no action on this. Hearing Ms. Suhm's definitive statement that there are no intentions whatsoever to make those kind of changes, Mr. Lane asked that the word be spread throughout the organization accordingly, in particular, to the Human Resource Director.

Ms. Suhm emphasized that although she has never been under Civil Service in her 30 year tenure with the City, she does not feel Civil Service prevents employees from being fired if the disciplinary process is handled right.

Questions two and three focus on statements made by First Assistant City Manager Ryan Evans and Public Information Officer Frank Libro about the "read-only" functionality. Their statements are wrong. Ms. Suhm stated that this information was obtained directly from NEOGOV. Ms. Ung will provide copies of tests she's run documenting the non functionality of the "read-only" feature.

**Special Meeting of the Civil Service Board**  
**Page 2**

Vice-Chair Sanderfer raised the next issue which he characterized as the heart of what his major concerns were. Speaking for the Board he said that the major antagonist would be Human Resources Director David Etheridge. While related to the NEOGOV issues, it actually goes deeper than that as to the separation again of what the Charter requires of Civil Service. Specifically, the whole issue with Ms. Ung's access being terminated twice when she was a Civil Service employee by Mr. Etheridge or at his instruction. This seems to go to the heart of the concerns the Board has and the Charter being trampled when it comes to the Civil Service Department.

Ms. Suhm admitted that this situation could have been handled better. She feels it is about communication. She does not like e-mails and phone calls when sensitive issues are involved. It should have been dealt with in person. The Vice-Chair emphasized that the Board wants to be sure that the lines are clearly drawn so neither the Human Resources Director nor Civil Service Secretary will cross into areas that would violate the City Charter. The impression he gets is that Mr. Etheridge is pretty haphazard whenever he wants to be and says and does things that violate the Charter.

As to the matter of a change control system Ms. Suhm indicated that her staff was waiting on the Secretary to have a discussion with the Board about security concerns. The Secretary indicated that that was a misunderstanding and is ready to move forward. Ms. Suhm does not think with a two portal system that a change form will be needed anymore but she said her staff is ready to work on it. She agreed to a 30 day timeframe to accomplish this.

NEOGOVS Process Review Manager Joanne Ung said she believed some sort of change control process would be needed despite a two portal system. The customer facing side needs to be consistent regardless of which portal a customer is going into.

Mr. Lane brought up the matter of four examples in the last year where the responsibilities of the Civil Service Board were violated – changing the job requisition, moving background checks out of Civil Service, modifying the criminal convictions matrix, and most recently the civilian employee grievance proceedings. He asked the City Manager to assure the Board unconditionally that this kind of stuff would stop. She said that she did not ever want to get in this mess again.

Ms. Voltmer asked Ms. Suhm if she thought that Human Resources Director David Etheridge shares her views about keeping Civil Service. She responded again that she's not for getting rid of Civil Service although she will not be on a campaign to promote it.

The Secretary emphasized that she felt the meeting with the City Manager was a very positive step. She reiterated that she would like to work as a partner with the City Manager in other areas beyond employment, perhaps in other areas in which she has expertise.

The Vice-Chair stated for the record that based on the Board meetings, conversations he'd had with the City Attorney, and responses to the Board's questions, that there were Charter violations, but did not believe that they were intentional.

The Board entered into executive session from 9:54 a.m. 10:40 a.m. pursuant to Section 551.074 of the Texas Open Meetings Act to discuss personnel matters involving the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of a public officer or employee or to hear a complaint against an officer or employee.

There was no action taken in Executive Session.

After coming out of Executive Session Mr. Lane made a recommendation that the Board send a letter to the Mayor and members of the City Council to wrap these matters up. He asked that each of the Board Members present communicate the points they would like to include in the letters to the Vice-Chair and Secretary. He also suggested the City Attorney's Office and City Manager receive it before it is sent to Council in the event there are points of strong disagreement.

The three action items agreed to by the City Manager are the functionality of the "read-only" feature, two portal system, and a change control system.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

**(A complete transcription of this meeting is available)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**ATTESTED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**APPROVED**