

**MGEC / Mn/DOT Meet & Confer**  
**Friday, January 18, 2008**  
**1:30-3:00 p.m.**  
**Conference Room CO 461**

**Committee Members Present:**

Dana Wheeler, Joseph Pignato, Karin van Dyck, Kevin Gray, Lisa Freese, Mary Skarda, Rick Arnebeck, Robert Winter, Theresa Johnson, Tim Henkel

**Committee Members Absent:**

Julie Skallman, Mary Stohr, Rich Peterson

**Additional Guests:**

Trent Weber

**Introductions**

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

**Review Notes from March 22, 2007, Meeting**

Dana noted the MGEC Meet & Confer meetings with MnDOT management used to be held twice each year; however, that has not been the case this past couple years. A sub group of Mn/DOT labor relations and MGEC were meeting monthly. Issues were not getting resolved. MGEC recognizes the value of having managers participate in the meetings. Dana suggested having meetings more often, at least bi-monthly, until issues get resolved and then as needed.

Agenda Item #3 – **Engineering Wages – Mn/DOT Legislative Discussion** – Dana stated he has not received any information pertaining to discussions/decisions on this topic.

Agenda Item #6 – **Dilemma Study Topics (Pertaining to Engineering Classifications)** – MGEC requested a copy of this information.

Agenda Item #7 – **Creation of New Engineering Specialist Principal Classification (Status?)** – Dana expressed concerns regarding workloads.

Agenda Item #8 – **Informing New Employees of MGEC Contract**

**To Do:** Karin van Dyck stated the above-noted items would be addressed at the next MGEC Meet & Confer meeting.

**Mn/DOT Policy to Terminate Employment of Grad 2 Engineers Who Do Not Obtain the PE License within 6 Years**

Theresa Johnson distributed a copy of the Mn/DOT policy – The Expectation of Registration for Positions Requiring a Professional Engineering License (effective April 24, 2006). Dana stated the union was aware of three employees, hired before the policy was changed, who will not have become PEs within the six year time limit. The employees were not aware, at point of hire, that they would be terminated after that time. He stated that employees who have passed probation in

their permanent Grad. 2 Engineer positions have contractual and legal rights to their employment. Application of the new policy will be a violation of those rights. Theresa noted that two employees have now passed for licensure; one employee has not passed. She also stated the employee who has failed to pass the PE license was aware of the policy when hired (in 2002). It was also included in the offer letter as a condition of employment. In addition, all engineers are notified of the six year deadline at their fifth year anniversary mark. In the remaining employee's case, she didn't take the test the last time it was offered before the six year deadline. Karin stated this issue may need to be discussed further at the administration level, via a policy change. Dana reminded everyone that the policy in place before would not have cost the currently affected employee a job. It would have transferred her to an EX/SES position. He also asked of the employer knew of her personal/work circumstances affecting taking and passing the PE. He believes the employer should understand these personal circumstances of the employee before terminating her employment.

MGEC noted the union offers testing reviews for any employees who need to take the test. Joe reminded everyone of the years and cost of investment MnDOT has in these employees who are successfully performing their jobs. He suggested MnDOT could better facilitate the mentoring or advising employees receive to help focus on areas of more difficulty for them. Kevin stated there needs to be a fair and equitable answer for this and other classifications. Rick suggested it might be helpful to re-review the Division Directors' discussion regarding this topic.

Bob asked, "What does MGEC suggest to resolve the issue?" Dana suggested that the employee in question not have her employment terminated but that other options including more time, mentoring or a job change be considered. He also asked that MGEC be included in policy change discussions as those discussion take place in order to more fully participate in problem resolution and work with the ideas of managers also discussing policy matters as they regard their members. He also suggested engineers who are part of the Mn/DOT structure be included in the process.

Theresa noted that if employees who do not pass for the PE license are moved into another classification this will, in turn, have a definite impact on the TS series employees and their ability to promote into the ES rank.

Lisa suggested a post-grad rotation (mentoring program) to help employees pass the PE test. Joe stressed that an advisor needs to keep a relationship with trainees, even after they no longer are considered to be trainees, to provide support when needed. Lisa also recommended that an advocate from the Board be available to attend Grad Engineer meetings.

**To Do:** Dana requested that an additional meeting be set up – within the next 30-60 days – for resolution of this issue.

### **Mn/DOT Discipline Data Collection**

Karin supplied a sample of a Discipline Report from the Labor Relations Tracking System database, known as ARIES. She explained that the ARIES program was developed in December 2006 as a method for entering and storing reliable data, comprehensive tracking, and consistent discipline guidelines. ARIES is a tool used by the Mn/DOT Human Resources directors / staff to track grievances, arbitration issues, investigations, corrective actions (leave of absence, meeting with supervisors, etc.). The data is searchable by specific criteria, as needed.

Dana stated MGEC is pleased to see MnDOT develop this record keeping system and noted that MGEC also has its own tracking system in place.

## **Workplace Planning Report**

Trent Weber distributed a copy of a page taken from the State of the Workforce Report (September 2007) which outlined total employees by bargaining unit, percent of employees by bargaining unit, and a 10 year comparison of the change / percent of the whole for the different Engineering positions.

Trent discussed the projected retirements for MGEC Engineers eligible by 2011. Eligible is defined as 62 years or age of Rule of 90, whichever occurs first. The percentages are as follows:

- Engineering Specialist – **33%**
- Engineering Specialist, Sr. – **54%**
- Engineer, Senior – **10%**
- Engineer, Principal – **20%**
- Engineer, Administrator – **34%**
- Engineer Senior Administrator – **26%**
- Engineer Principal Administrator Transportation – **50%**

Dana expressed a concern that state engineering staff may leave to take more lucrative salary offers in the private sector. Kevin noted that the attrition rate is actually 3% in Engineering; 9% for the rest of the Mn/DOT MGEC staff.

Trent pointed out the “average” retirement is 3.2 years after first time eligibility; most staff either go immediately or wait 6-7 years until they reach 65 years of age and then retire.

## **Human Resource Council (HRC)**

Theresa stated the Human Resource Council was resurrected about 3-4 months ago. Three of the Council’s focus areas are work force, work environment, and organizational health. The Council is trying to push forward priorities and find out what Human Resource-related issues can be impacted.

Lisa added the HRC offers a broader spectrum that will aid and advise administration and Division Directors. The Council is an advocate for both internal and external issues. Theresa talked about the issue of shared services / consolidated positions. Lisa also stated Mn/DOT met with DOER last March or April regarding the pay scale structure. She found that most state agencies are reporting issues with all classifications and that DOER has started to recognize this as an issue.

**To Do:** Theresa stated a copy of the membership roster for the Human Resource Council will be sent to all members of the MGEC Meet & Confer group.

## **Building Safety**

Kevin stated that Mn/DOT leases the CO Building from the MN Department of Administration. Work continues to bolster the walk out areas and maintain safety for staff and visitors.

## **Future Meetings**

Karin stated Meet & Confer meetings are held quarterly with Commissioner’s staff and the other unions. In addition, meetings could be held monthly with a smaller HR group. Dana stated he prefers to have monthly, or bi-monthly, Meet & Confer meetings with Division Directors as it’s important for MGEC to hear from, and have discussions with, the Commissioner’s level staff.

Kevin suggested that MGEC get on an agenda for ad hoc discussion at the Division Directors meeting. Theresa stated that Division Directors might wish to discuss an option of attending the MGEC monthly meetings on a rotating basis.

**To Do:** Karin will discuss this issue with Rich Peterson to make a determination regarding regularity and number of MGEC meetings during 2008. Appointments will be sent out as appropriate.

**Next Meeting: April 14, 2008 – 1:30-3:00 p.m. – Conf Room CO 461 (unless otherwise notified).**

Note taker: Brenda Machovsky