



## BENEFITS COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 7, 2020

**A. Call to Order**

Linda Beam called the Zoom meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

**B. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Linda Beam, Teresa Laughlin, Judy Cater, Ruth Barnaba, Michael Muheisen, Anel Gonzalez, Barbara Baer, Becky McCluskey, Brent Crane, Christine Winterle, Jenny Fererro, Judy Dolan, Lesley Blankenship-Williams, Mary Jayne Conway, Mike Dimmick, Ping Lee, Tricia Frady, Steve Spear

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Wendy Corbin, Veronica Sadowski

**Members Absent:** Marti Snyder, Yulian Ligioso

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** None

**Guest:** Michael Muheisen and Brent Crane, BrightPath Consulting Services, Inc.

**C. Review of Minutes**

1. Review meeting minutes September 2, 2020. Suggested edits:

Change: Linda Beam that the benefits support system to: Linda Beam thanked the benefits support system

Change: Mary Jayne Conway asked if training to: Mary Jayne Conway asked if retiree training

During review of minutes a few topics were brought up by committee members and Linda Beam agreed to discuss. Topics include the following: retirees unaware of Open Enrollment and training of group I and II retirees.

2. Review meeting minutes May 6, 2020 pending.

Linda called for a motion to approve minutes with edits. Teresa Laughlin approved and Jenny Fererro seconded the motion. Lesley Blankenship-Williams abstained and all other present members approved.

**D. Discussion Items**

Linda Beam welcomed the group. First discussion item was dependent audit conclusion. Linda Beam started the discussion by stating the District engaged with Unify HR as a partner in the dependent audit process. This process has wrapped up and it was a smooth and successful process. Approximately 47 dependents were removed which included a mix of active and some retirees. Wendy Corbin thanked Unify HR and expressed how professional and organized they were through this process. She also stated that we could not have gotten the dependent audit done without them and that the District did actualize some savings. Linda Beam mentioned how FCMAT recommended the District participate regularly in dependent audits going forward. Several committee members asked about the savings and if any retirees were included. Linda Beam estimates savings close to \$200,000 and stated some retirees were included but the majority were active employees. Several committee members asked for specific numbers instead of a generality. Linda Beam agreed to add to the next agenda and mentioned that the next dependent audit would not happen just before or during open enrollment. Becky McCluskey asked if coverage was lost for retirees who did not respond. Wendy Corbin stated that retirees did not lose benefits but dependents were removed. She also stated that the benefits office went as far as to contact emergency contacts to connect with retirees. Calls were made to all who had an available phone number on file.

Next discussion item was open enrollment changes. Linda Beam lead the discussion by stating that several informational zoom meetings were held, recorded and added to the Benefits website. Linda felt the zoom sessions were very successful. Wendy Corbin stated that a larger number of employees, 500+, logged into the eBenefits platform and proactively made changes. In addition, a couple of retirees also enrolled via the eBenefits platform. Next, Wendy Corbin addressed the concern regarding retirees unaware of open enrollment. Wendy stated that the benefits office usually arranges for post card mailing to inform retirees of open enrollment. However, due to the negotiations process open enrollment was delayed. Add in the challenges of a remote work environment and having to coordinate the post cards with printing and mailing services. Retiree post card mailings were not feasible this year. Retirees were auto-enrolled in their current plan with no disruption. Retirees who had an interest in changing plans were assisted by the benefits office. All open enrollment changes have been digitally delivered to carriers and the benefits office is currently auditing and reconciling. Once this process is complete, we will send confirmations to employees so if any benefits need to be mitigated we can help. Although it was not an ideal process, workshops were specific to active employees. Changes did not apply to retirees and we did not want to confuse or alarm the retiree population. Jenny Ferrero asked when exact numbers and amount of savings would be available. Linda Beam stated she was hopeful to know by the end of

October after the payroll run is complete. Linda asked the committee to keep in mind that there are recent retirees who just transitioned and review of the October and preferably, November payroll data would need to be reviewed to provide benefit payroll expenditures. Wendy Corbin provided her perspective stating the reporting of savings would be a global savings as there are various reasons employees change. Linda Beam stated she is just as interested as the unions to see the savings and outcome and she will try to gather information over the next two payrolls. She said information will be provided to the budget committee as VP Ligioso is also asking. Anel Gonzalez asked for a breakdown of the data respective to classification as well as plans chosen. Michael Muheisen stated that his group is waiting for additional analysis from eBenefits and Unify HR to try to break down the data. Linda Beam reiterated that we all have a common interest in the enrollment data and payroll numbers and she would disseminate the information as soon as she was confident in the data. Barbara Baer asked how many PT faculty enrolled during open enrollment. Wendy Corbin responded with the following PT faculty fall enrollment data: 28 medical, 31 dental and 21 vision. Judy Dolan stated that PACRA is available and ready to help. Mary Jayne Conway thanked Wendy for recognizing retirees were not notified about open enrollment. She also asked about the eBenefits portal and how we plan to inform retirees of this new platform and if a number of those who signed in could be provided. Christine Winterle explained that the district started using eBenefits two years ago and mandatory enrollment was required at that time. Employees and retirees can sign into the eBenefits portal anytime to review their benefit elections. The district would need email blasting assistance from PACRA and we can try to set up training but as for now, those who can't make changes via eBenefits are to reach out to the benefits office. Mary Jayne Conway asked how many retirees have registered and how many retirees have not registered via the eBenefits platform. Christine Winterle responded that numbers are not provided unless there are issues. Linda Beam asked if there were any other questions regarding open enrollment. Christine Winterle commented that she wanted to thank the unions and benefits office for getting employee's to attend the Zoom workshops. It was a difficult and complicated issue to cover as well as a heavy lift to get it done so quickly. She also stressed if anyone is having issues they should be referred to [Benefits@palomar.edu](mailto:Benefits@palomar.edu). Linda Beam closed this topic by stating that although there were a few bumps open enrollment was very well received and that the informational sessions were so successful that the college may want to continue. She also stressed that anyone having concerns or issues should reach out to the benefits office directly.

Final discussion retiree benefits comments. Linda Beam started this discussion by stating, we will try to provide information to everyone regarding eBenefits access information including how to create an account. Linda Beam said she'd like to see if PACRA can help disseminate the information in their newsletter. Steve Spear stated that we don't want to over notify retirees. He stated that the benefits committee meeting is not the place to bring up personal issues. Steve then asked about the status of Part D reimbursements. Wendy Corbin responded stating that reimbursements are sent out quarterly. She reminded the committee that the benefits office is not a fiscal transaction office. She stated that she has been busy trying to help retirees who had premiums submit monthly data and information for reimbursement. In the middle of this we went to a remote environment and private documentation cannot be taken home. We have been sending payments on a quarterly basis and running into people who say they have provided the information and we don't have record of it. The reimbursement forms must be completed along with proof as requested by the fiscal department. This process is new and has been a transition for the retirees and the benefits office and we are not in a position to automate. Forms will need to be filled out and proof will need to be sent in. Wendy Corbin is in the office 1 time per week, it is not a perfect process and payments were late. With so many competing priorities we are struggling to get our regular workload done. Steve Spears asked if the savings to the district was worth the heartache. Linda Beam stated there is cost savings to the EGWP plan. That this plan was created and established to create cost savings to districts. Linda Beam acknowledged what Wendy stated and said there are opportunities for efficiency that we can take a look at in regards to EGWP reimbursements. Linda Beam asked if there were any other questions. Becky McClusky asked if savings would be presented at next meeting. Linda Beam said she would have to check. Due to the dependent audit and open enrollment it may have to be pushed out another month. Judy Dolan asked if there were any discussions happening anywhere in budget among constituents to change retiree benefits. Linda Beam responded saying that benefit changes occurred for active employees only per the agreement. Employees who retire after October 1, 2020 will receive the same benefits as active employees and at this time there is no specific dialogue on existing retiree benefits. Mary Jayne Conway asked when can retirees expect Medicare training and how does the benefits office plan to inform everyone. Linda Beam responded stating that her interest is to provide resources and information. Information is available on the benefits website for retirees to be informed as to what it means to be Medicare eligible. Her preference is to provide resources so anyone at anytime can be informed. Mary Jayne Conway responded in addition to the webpage what was requested was training for all employee's not just going to the webpage. Christine Winterle stated that right now the benefits office has very high priorities and with the holidays coming up it would be difficult to provide high quality trainings as everyone has different interest. Mary Jayne Conway responded stating that Michael Muheisen was looking into it. Michael Muheisen responded stating that he is looking into

providing recorded webinars by Kaiser and Anthem so the district would not have to try to get everyone together at the same time. Linda Beam noted that any retiree or employee who has questions are to contact the benefits office directly at [Benefits@palomar.edu](mailto:Benefits@palomar.edu). This is the best way for the benefits office to be responsive and assist. She highly recommended if any committee members have colleagues reaching out to them that they refer their colleagues back to the benefits office for assistance. Judy Dolan stated she would add the contact information in all email blasts and suggested copying Christine Winterle and Linda Beam on the email blasts. Christine Winterle stated that she wanted to be sure we are not overwhelming people right now. That we are open to suggestions but timing is not good right now in regards to training and the idea of recording trainings was ideal. Judy Dolan responded staying it was difficult trying to get everyone together, it doesn't work. Linda Beam asked if there were any other comments. No other benefit related comments were made. Linda thanked everyone for attending.

**F. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

**Next Meeting: November 4, 2020**