

STATE OF WASHINGTON

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

In the matter of the petition of:)
)
WASHINGTON PUBLIC EMPLOYEES)
ASSOCIATION) CASE 18074-C-03-1125
)
For clarification of an existing) DECISION 8381 - PSRA
bargaining unit of employees of:)
) ORDER CLARIFYING
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 20) BARGAINING UNIT
(WALLA WALLA))
)
)
)

Lyle Loncosty, Employee Relations Specialist, for the union.

Nancy Reiff, Human Resources Manager, for the employer.

On December 12, 2003, the Washington Public Employees Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 365 (union), filed a petition for clarification of a bargaining unit with the Public Employment Relations Commission under WAC 391-35-026, seeking division of an existing bargaining unit represented by the union at Walla Walla Community College (employer). An investigation conference was conducted on January 20, 2004, by Hearing Officer Starr H. Knutson.

The Executive Director accepts the stipulations and information presented by the parties during the investigation conference and, acting under WAC 391-35-026(1), divides the historical bargaining unit into two separate bargaining units conforming to RCW 41.80.070(1)(a), as follows: (1) a bargaining unit of non-supervisory employees; and (2) a bargaining unit of supervisors.

BACKGROUND

The employer is a state institution of higher education, within the community college system. The union has historically represented a bargaining unit of classified employees of this employer.

The bargaining unit was created in 1971,¹ and has existed in its present form since that time. That unit has historically included both supervisors and non-supervisory employees.

The Personnel System Reform Act of 2002 (PSRA) was signed into law in 2002, with various effective dates. A new collective bargaining system for state civil service employees is codified in Chapter 41.80 RCW, of which one section that took effect on June 13, 2002, is pertinent here:

RCW 41.80.070 BARGAINING UNITS - CERTIFICATION.

(1) A bargaining unit of employees covered by this chapter existing on June 13, 2002, shall be considered an appropriate unit, *unless the unit does not meet all the requirements of (a) . . . of this subsection.* The commission, after hearing upon reasonable notice to all interested parties, shall decide, in each application for certification as an exclusive bargaining representative, the unit appropriate for certification. In determining the new units or modification of existing units, the commission shall consider: the duties, skills and working conditions of the employees; the history of collective bargaining; the extent of organization among the employees; the desires of the employees; and the avoidance of excessive fragmentation. *However, a unit is not appropriate if it includes:*

(a) *Both supervisors and non-supervisory employees.*

. . . .

(emphasis added).

¹ Higher Education Personnel Board case HRC-16.

The Commission adopted a rule to implement that statute during the transition period which will exist until the duty to bargain under the new system goes into effect on July 1, 2004, as follows:

WAC 391-35-026 SPECIAL PROVISION--STATE CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES. In addition to the circumstances described in WAC 391-35-020, bargaining units of state civil service employees may be modified under this section until RCW 41.80.050 and 41.80.080 take effect on July 1, 2004.

(1) *Bargaining units of state civil service employees in existence on June 13, 2002, shall be subject to being "divided" into separate units of supervisors and nonsupervisory employees under this section.*

(a) A petition to have an existing unit divided may be filed by the exclusive bargaining representative, by the employer, or by those parties jointly.

(b) The separation of bargaining units shall be implemented on or before July 1, 2004.

. . .

(emphasis added). By the stipulation now before the Executive Director, the parties seek to have the historical unit "divided" under WAC 391-35-026(1).

DISCUSSION

Applicable Legal Standards

The determination and modification of appropriate bargaining units of state civil service employees is now a function delegated by the Legislature to the Public Employment Relations Commission. RCW 41.06.340; 41.80.070. In past cases where parties have stipulated to divide bargaining units to conform with statutory changes, the Commission has accepted such stipulations and dispensed with a full hearing process. *Benton County*, Decision 2221 (PECB, 1985) and

Cowlitz County, Decision 5008 (PECB, 1995) [dividing historical department-wide units in sheriff's departments after the law enforcement officers became eligible for interest arbitration]; *King County*, Decision 6668 (PECB, 1999) [dividing historical units to reflect the eligibility of some of the employees (those working in public transit operations) for interest arbitration].

The processing of this case is greatly simplified by the parties' agreement that the historical bargaining unit configuration created under different statutory provisions than now exist must be divided to conform to the current statute.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Walla Walla Community College is an institution of higher education of the state of Washington within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(10).
2. The Washington Public Employees Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 365, is an employee organization within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(7).
3. The union is the exclusive bargaining representative of a bargaining unit established by the Washington Higher Education Personnel Board on September 22, 1971, in case HRC-16. That unit has historically included all classified employees of the employer.
4. The employer and union have stipulated that the historical bargaining unit configuration is not appropriate under RCW 41.80.070, and that the bargaining unit should be divided into separate units of supervisors and non-supervisory employees.

5. The employer and union have stipulated to the respective eligibility lists for the separate units of supervisors and non-supervisory employees.
6. No other facts have been discovered or brought to the attention of the Executive Director which call into question the propriety of the stipulations described in paragraphs 3 and 4 of these findings of fact.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Public Employment Relations Commission has jurisdiction in this matter under Chapter 41.80 RCW and WAC 391-35-026.
2. The bargaining unit historically known as the "Classified Bargaining Unit" is inappropriate under RCW 41.80.070, by reason of its inclusion of a mix of supervisors and non-supervisory employees.
3. The stipulations of the parties to divide the historical bargaining unit will implement the requirements of RCW 41.80.070(1)(a).

ORDER

The bargaining unit shall be divided into two bargaining units described as follows:

1. All non-supervisory civil service employees of Community College District 20 (Walla Walla Community College), excluding confidential employees, internal auditors, supervisors, and employees excluded from the bargaining unit by order of the Washington Personnel Resources Board or its predecessors.

2. All supervisory civil service employees of Community College District 20 (Walla Walla Community College), excluding confidential employees, internal auditors, non-supervisory employees, and employees historically excluded from the bargaining unit by order of the Washington Personnel Resources Board or its predecessors.

ISSUED at Olympia, Washington, on this 2nd day of February, 2004.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION



MARVIN L. SCHURKE, Executive Director

This order will be the final order of the agency on the issue addressed unless a notice of appeal is filed with the Commission under WAC 391-35-210.