

STATE OF WASHINGTON

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

In the matter of the petition of:)
)
WASHINGTON PUBLIC EMPLOYEES)
ASSOCIATION) CASE 18125-C-04-1135
)
For clarification of an existing) DECISION 8414 - PSRA
bargaining unit of employees of:)
)
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 13) ORDER CLARIFYING
(LOWER COLUMBIA COLLEGE)) BARGAINING UNIT
)
_____)

Mark Lyon, Attorney at Law, for the union.

Michael P. Sellars, Assistant Attorney General, for the employer.

Gladys Burbank, Director of Activities, for the Washington Federation of State Employees.

On January 9, 2004, the Washington Public Employees Association (WPEA) 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. The Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) was granted intervention in the proceedings, based on its filing of a representation petition under Chapter 391-25 WAC. Case 17319-E-03-2818. An investigation conference was conducted on February 18, 2003, by Representation Coordinator Sally J. Iverson.

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 of state civil service

employees 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 community college operated under Title 28B RCW. The WPEA has historically represented all classified employees working in that facility.

The bargaining unit was created in 1970, and has existed in its present form since 1993¹. That unit has historically included both supervisors and non-supervisory employees. The Personnel Representative 1 class has historically been excluded from that unit.

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

¹ Higher Education Personnel Board case HEPB-RBUM #150.

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.) 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.

(2) *Bargaining units of state civil service employees in existence on June 13, 2002, shall be subject to being "perfected" under this section.*

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

(b) All of the unit determination criteria set forth in RCW 41.80.070 shall be applicable to proceedings under this section. The history of bargaining in a unit configuration that is fragmentary and/or was based on narrower considerations shall not preclude creation of a "perfected" bargaining unit as to which a community of interests is demonstrated with regard to:

(i) The duties, skills and working conditions of all positions or classifications to be included in the "perfected" bargaining unit; and

(ii) The extent of organization and avoidance of unnecessary fragmentation shall be implemented to avoid stranding of other positions or classifications in units

so small as to prejudice their statutory bargaining rights;
and

(iii) The required separation of supervisors and nonsupervisory employees is implemented based on the delegations of authority then in existence; and

(iv) Two or more existing bargaining units can be merged through the procedure set forth in this section; and

(v) The exclusive bargaining representative demonstrates that it has majority support among any employees to be accreted to the bargaining unit(s) being "perfected."

By their stipulation, 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. The Columbia College District 13 (Lower Columbia College) is an institution of higher education of the state of Washington within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(1).
2. The Washington Public Employees Association, an employee organization within the meaning of RCW 41.80.005(7), has historically represented a bargaining unit described by the Higher Education Personnel Board on October 12, 1970, in HEPB-RBUM #150. That unit historically included all civil service employees except the Personnel Representative 1 class.
3. The parties have stipulated that the historical bargaining unit configuration is not appropriate under RCW 41.80.070, and that the historical bargaining unit should be divided into separate units of supervisors and non-supervisory employees.
4. The parties have largely stipulated to the respective eligibility lists for the separate units, and have framed only limited issues for determination in the pending representation case.
5. 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 historical bargaining unit of civil service employees of Lower Columbia College 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 13 (Lower Columbia College), excluding confidential employees, internal auditors, and supervisors.
2. All supervisory civil service employees of Community College District 13 (Lower Columbia College), excluding confidential employees, internal auditors, and non-supervisory employees.

ISSUED at Olympia, Washington, on this 19th 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.