

FEDERAL PREVAILING RATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

637th FPRAC

JANICE R. LACHANCE, Chair, Presiding

Thursday, April 21, 2022

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
Office of Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415**ATTENDANCE:****Members/Alternates:**Management Members:

Mark Allen, OPM

Christopher Lynch, DoD

Mandy Laughlin, Army

Nancy Klinitzki, Air Force

Ophelia A. Vicks, VA

Labor Members:

Paul O'Connor, MTD

Jacque Simon, AFGE

Richard Loeb, AFGE

Carisa Carmack, NAGE

Staff Specialists and Visitors:

Jeanne Jacobson, Designated Federal Officer, OPM

Ana Paunoiu, OPM

Karl Fendt, DoD

Gary Kistner, DoD

Erica Abiera, DoD

Chrissy Wlezien, DoD

Roy Poorker, DoD

Dawna Powell, DoD

JeeYoung Kang, Army

Sheila Willis, VA

Alethea Smalls, VA

Keyonna Butler, VA

Peggy Cleveland, Navy

Simone Griffin, Navy

Mathew Philippi, Navy

Arleen Romba, VA

Ned George, AFGE Local 1647

Margaretta Rodgers, MTD

Jerome Mikowicz

Recording Secretary:
Mike Eicher, OPM

[Transcript prepared from digital audio produced by FPRAC.]

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P R O C E E D I N G

CHAIR LACHANCE: I want to say good morning to all of you. This is the 637th meeting of the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee. It is a minute or two after 10 a.m., and we are holding this meeting virtually. We are happy to be having a meeting, even though it is virtual, but it will be recorded, as usual, and a verbatim transcript will be provided to all of the members for your review at the next meeting.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Janice Lachance. I was pleased and excited and honored to be asked to chair FPRAC and work with all of you on some of these important issues that are facing our wage-grade employees. It's something that was very important to me my first time around at OPM, which was in the Clinton administration, and I'm really looking forward to working with all of you. This is a complex system with a lot of implications if things aren't done right. I hope you will be patient with me as I get up to speed, as I learn about the system, and learn about how you do business. Feel free to reach out to educate me. A little bit of patience is being requested but also some proactiveness, right? Let me know what is happening with all of you, and hopefully, we will be able to all work together constructively and make sure we are a meeting the challenges of the day.

Let's start with introductions. I know we have some new people who have joined us for this—I don't want to say "new term," but new phase since we haven't had a meeting in quite a long time. We're going to start with the Management members. Mark, do you want to start with OPM?

MR. ALLEN: Thank you. This is Mark Allen representing the OPM staff.

MR. LYNCH: Christopher Lynch representing Department of Defense.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Army?

MS. LAUGHLIN: Sorry. Searching for my mute button. My name is Mandy Laughlin, and I am representing Army, replacing Mr. Buck.

CHAIR LACHANCE: The Air Force?

MS. KLINITSKI: Yes. Hi. Good morning. This is Nancy Klinitski representing from the Air Force, and matter of fact, there is one other action officer. Her name is Ms. Kim Eidson. Unfortunately, she has problems actually being at the Teams. She tried calling, but she said the ID number was invalid. So, anyways, I told her that this meeting was going to be recorded, so I'm standing in for her. Thank you.

CHAIR LACHANCE: That's great. Thank you.

Department of Veterans Affairs?

MS. VICKS: Good morning, everyone. This is Ann Vicks. I'm representing the VA along with Sheila Willis.

MS. WILLIS: Good morning, everyone.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Let's move over to the Labor representatives. Metal Trades Department.

MR. O'CONNOR: Paul O'Connor, IBW, representing Metal Trades.

CHAIR LACHANCE: AFGE?

MS. SIMON: We have two of us here. I am Jacque Simon, Policy Director for AFGE.

MR. LOEB: And I'm Richard Loeb, Policy Counsel for AFGE.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Thank you. Welcome.

NAGE?

MS. CARMACK: Good morning, everyone. My name is Carisa Carmack, and I'm

an Assistant General Counsel with NAGE appearing on their behalf today.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. And the civilian technicians, ACT?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: I don't know how long to wait because we're all struggling with the mute buttons, .

Jacque?

MS. SIMON: I think I saw an email from Steve Landis saying that he was going to attend. I don't know if he's on, but he's the ACT rep.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. Well, we'll look for him. I know there seem to be some people who are still coming into the call.

I know we have some guests. Does anybody want to introduce themselves?

MS. CLEVELAND: Ms. Lachance, my name is Peggy Cleveland, and I am the Compensation and Classification Program Manager for Department of Navy, and joining me today is Ms. Simone Griffin and Mathew Philippi.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Thank you. Welcome.

MR. ALLEN: I would note that Navy is currently a backbencher—

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes.

MR. ALLEN: —for this year.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Right.

MR. ALLEN: Of course, still very welcome to be here.

MS. LAUGHLIN: This is Mandy Laughlin again. I just wanted to add that I have Ms. Jee Young Kang as well as a guest for Army.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Thank you.

MS. SIMON: Well, this is Jacque. I believe we have Ned George here as a guest. Ned, would you like to introduce yourself? I see your name, but you're muted.

[No audible response.]

MS. SIMON: Well, Ned is on, and he is from—oh, now you're unmuted. Ned?

[No audible response.]

MS. SIMON: Muted again. In any case, he's the local present at Tobyhanna Army Depot in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania.

MR. FENDT: And this is Karl Fendt from Wage and Salary, and I have a couple of other staff members from Wage who are currently on the line: Ms. Chrissy Wlezien, Ms. Dawna Powell, Erica Abiera. And apologies of I miss another Wage staff, but Wage and Salary is represented. Thank you.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Thank you.

Anyone else want to say hello?

MS. RODGERS: My name is Margaretta Rodgers, and I am the Chairperson for Metal Trades Council in NAVSEA, Tidewater area.

MS. ROMBA: And good morning. This is Arleen Romba. I'm with the Veterans Administration compensation team.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Welcome.

MR. MIKOWICZ: I'd like to say hello. My name is Jerry Mikowicz. I'm a retired Federal employee. I used to work with this committee, and I'm happy to be here for this historic moment when it continues again, especially with the Honorable Lachance leading it, and hi, Jacque. I remember working closely with you over the years.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Welcome, Jerry. That's how dedicated OPM employees

are. They even come back after they retire for these important sessions. Welcome, Jerry, and thank you for your years of service.

So, unless there's anyone else who's joined, I think we can move on to some of the issues that we have to consider. There are two announcements, though, before we proceed. There is a memorandum from OPM Director regarding Fiscal Year 2022 Prevailing Rate Pay Adjustment and the memorandum about achieving a \$15-per-hour minimum pay rate for Federal employees.

Mark, do you have any comments on those?

MR. ALLEN: This is just something we share with all the members as a custom. This pay adjustment memo came out at the end of December and provided instructions to the Department of Defense and other agencies on how to implement the pay cap and floor increase provisions in appropriations law. We were under a Continuing Resolution when we issued this memo. There was a subsequent, very short memo that we sent out when the omnibus spending bill was put into effect. So it's for everybody's information really just to document for historical purposes. The pay cap and floor increase is still in effect and what the amounts are.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. Any questions or comments?

MS. SIMON: Yeah. Mark, was that sent out to all of us?

MR. ALLEN: Yeah. I believe Ana sent that out last week with the agenda.

MS. SIMON: Okay.

MR. ALLEN: If you didn't get it, we'll resend to everybody.

MS. SIMON: I'll look. I was on vacation last week, so—

MR. ALLEN: Okay.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Well-deserved.

Can we move to review the transcript of the last meeting, which stunningly was held in November 2020? If anybody can remember what happened then and you have changes or comments on the transcript, please feel free. Anything that you want to bring to our attention, any issues with the transcript or comments?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: If there are no objections, we will adopt the transcript from the last meeting. I want to give everyone a second to come off mute if they need to.

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: But hearing no objection, the transcript is adopted. Thank you, everyone.

And again, harkening back to November of 2020, there are a number of Old Business items that are still on the agenda from that November 2020 meeting. Let's start with item (a), which is a letter from AFGE that requests FPRAC review of a proposal to not allow Federal Wage System wage-area boundaries to split the General Schedule Locality Pay Areas and a proposal to redefine Monroe County, Pennsylvania, from Scranton–Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, wage area to the New York, New York, wage area.

Then at the same time, it might behoove us to skip over to New Business item (b), which is also an AFGE letter that was submitted last month requesting that Monroe County, Pennsylvania, be redefined to the New York wage area, and also requesting FPRAC to review a proposal to limit all non-rest-of-U.S. General Schedule Locality Pay Areas to no more than one Federal Wage System wage area.

Jacque, do you want to present these issues and talk through them with the group?

MS. SIMON: I can do that. I think most of the group is familiar with these issues,

and at least one of our guests, Ned George, I believe, would like also to speak to these proposals. But in broad strokes, I think, you know, most of the people who are here are familiar with these proposals.

We have a terrible inequity between the way the local pay area boundaries are determined in the General Schedule locality pay system and the wage-grade locality pay system. One is based on commuting rates, the standard definition of a local labor market, and another is based on the location of military installations dating back to the 1950s.

What we are trying to do is bring those two disparate approaches to locality pay into alignment. In Tobyhanna, you have a particularly acute inequity because the wage grades are—their base wages are determined on the basis of what building trades employers are paying in Scranton versus the GS employees in Tobyhanna being included in the New York City locality because of a very high level of commuting between the area and New York.

People who are unfamiliar with the region don't realize that these counties in Pennsylvania have very much become excerpts of the New York City and are part of the New York City labor market, and we're trying to bring those to approaches to locality pay and to alignment, as I said earlier.

It causes tremendous inequities, and as my brother, Ned George, is going to talk to you about, in addition to sort of morale issues, it has caused problems with recruitment and retention.

Further, I encourage anybody who has questions about this to visit Tobyhanna because you almost have to see it to believe it if you're not familiar with what goes on in an Army depot, especially an electronics depot. The level of complexity of the work performed by the wage-grade employees at Tobyhanna is mind-boggling to somebody who doesn't really know

much about that kind of stuff. It is very, very complex work and very important work, and it's really not all that similar to the very important and complex work performed by electricians who are in the building trades. It's just different.

But in any case, that's the data we use, and what is more appropriate would be to include both workforces, the salaried workforce and the hourly workforce, in the same locality. They work side by side. They work in the same place. The work for the same employer, yet that same employer treats them as if they work in two different localities. And it's just—it's unsustainable, it's inequitable, and it needs to be rectified.

So, with that, I would love to hand over the mic to Ned George. Ned, are you guys on?

MR. GEORGE: Yeah. Can you hear me, Jacque?

MS. SIMON: We can hear you.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, hello. Good morning, everyone. My name is Edward George.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Hello.

MR. GEORGE: Hello.

My name is Edward George. I'm the current president here at AFGE Local 1647 in the beautiful Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. I want to talk about the inequity that has been going on here for well over 10 years.

I've been a Federal employee here since 2003. When I first came in to Tobyhanna, I would look around the shops, and most of our high-level technicians have been in the Federal sector for a long time doing these jobs. That's currently not the case. We've been having this inequity for a long time.

Our WG workforce is pretty much a steppingstone at this point toward GS

workforce or to the private industry. Currently, when we do our wage surveys, there is no competing job that correlated to the same kind of work that we do when we go out, we do our surveys.

Our painting is at a different level and with different materials than what is used in the labor trades. Our electronics work is a lot different and a lot complex issues that do not deal with that. Just outside of our gates, we have many, many businesses where our rates are much higher, and employees can walk in and get almost \$30 an hour at many institutions around here.

On my street alone where I live, less than 10 miles from the depot, every single home, other than mine, is a private home for New York City with people that live there. When I go to the stores, every single license plate in that parking lot, 75 percent of them are New York City. Every morning at the local bus stop and at the truck stations around here, there's hundreds of buses coming in and out of the city with people coming from one area to other. We have this inequity here going on forever.

I tracked the retention rates on the depot here of our employees leaving here and the reasons why they're leaving. Even our agency itself has started speaking to our employees to talk about the retention efforts and what they could do to possibly keep people here. We had low-level GS employee jobs with not a lot of higher potential. We are a stepping stone into private industry or other, Picatinny Arsenal which is right across the river from us. It happens every day.

Years ago when I would look at our retention efforts, 30 percent of our people would be leaving for private industry or leaving to go to other Federal installations. Seventy percent would be retirement. Right now, the coin is flipped. Every month, we are constantly losing, probably, 50 to 70 percent every month of our employees are going to other places for

better jobs, better money. This is impacting our ability to retain high-level technicians or higher, high-level technicians in every WG field we have.

We need your help to help you. We are the core of what keeps our nation running, and without us, it would cost a lot more money to get this work done anywhere else. We need your help. Please look at what the FPRAC Commission is put there to do. We have testified about this in the past FPRAC Commission twice with positive recommendations, and nothing happened for one reason or another. It is time to fix this inequity to help our employees, to help our nation, and I thank you for your time. That's all I have.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you very much. We certainly do appreciate your firsthand knowledge of the situation and hearing about what it's like to both work and live in the area.

Are there any other comments on this particular issue? Anyone from Management want to discuss it or any of the other Labor representatives?

MR. ALLEN: What I'd like to suggest at this point as a possible way forward has to do with a House report, encouraging OPM to do something. I'm going to read what was in the omnibus spending bill under House Report 11779, where it says the congressional committee is concerned that some General Schedule locality pay areas include several Federal Wage System areas which create pay increase disparities for hourly works within a GS locality. The committee encourages OPM to explore limiting the number of local wage areas defined within a GS pay locality to a single wage area.

When a congressional committee asks OPM to explore an issue regarding the Federal Wage System, the normal course of action, as with all Federal Wage System issues, is to take that to this committee. So what I would propose is that we, as a committee, explore what the

options are for addressing the concerns of the employees and Members of Congress who see the inequity and they see this for a number of years now.

I see Jacque has her hand up for a question.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Jacque?

MS. SIMON: Well, they got something a little bit wrong in that report language, as you know, Mark. We don't have inequities in pay increases anymore. What we have is inequities in the base pay.

I just want to remind everyone who's new that OPM has studied this thing to death over the years, and this is not a new proposal. It's been around for a long time. Our colleague who retired over the course of the pandemic, Madeline Gonzalez, put together—how many inches thick was that binder? It's 5 inches thick easily?

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes. We're going to hold it up now.

MS. SIMON: I mean, the data are not new, but the sort of framing of the issue, all the really heavy lifting has been done. We know what this proposal is. We know what its impact would be, and we know how to do it.

The reason you have that language is the Armed Services committees thought that we should exhaust our administrative remedy before Congress took action. We told them that we've been exhaustive.

But, anyway, here's our—here's one more time around, but delay is really not an option because, as Ned just described, the impact is happening every day. It has an impact on military readiness. The kinds of skills that we lose every day because of inadequate pay aren't easily reassembled next time war breaks out. These are highly, highly specialized skills that one accumulates over the course of a career, and the fact that we lose people when they—by the time

they achieve journeyman status is really a tragedy. And it's within our ability to rectify this situation. It's not only inequitable, but it also has a negative effect on military readiness and the ability of our troops to rely on the electronics equipment that they need to do their jobs.

So let's not study this thing for 2 more years. It's been studied. Let's take action as soon as it's practical to do so. Thanks.

MR. ALLEN: I agree with you on that, Jacque.

I would note that this binder that's sitting next to me was a joint Labor-Management report, but it's for 2012. So, if the committee is in agreement with taking this approach, I'm suggesting doing a refresh to see how everybody would be impacted by a proposal that's being suggested to use GS areas. It's going to take a little while to do the refresh of all the information, but I think one of the problems we had back in 2010 when Director Berry was presented with a recommendation, there was no detailed implementation plan. That's why we had to take a step back and take until sometime in 2012 to work together with each other to see what we could come up with in terms of report to give to Director Berry. He couldn't move forward with it when he did eventually get it, but I think we owe it to our current Director, Director Ahuja, to provide her with the most details implementation plan that we can put together so she's fully aware of who would be impacted by this and what the possible impacts would be on the local agency budgets and pay increases for employees.

I'm fully aware that we're in a very different labor market now than we were in 2010, 2012, as the Management members were suggesting a couple years to when the committee was last meeting and discussing this issue is that whenever there are recruitment and retention problems locally that the most expedient thing to do is use recruitment and retention incentives, special rates, and that may be something that Tobyhanna Army Depot may want to consider.

I think Paul had his hand up and then Jacque has hers.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. Paul?

MR. O'CONNOR: Hi. Yeah. The inequities that exist at Tobyhanna exist across the country in a number of Federal installations. Currently, I am the Director of the Government Employees for IBEW. Prior to that, I'm also a retired Federal employee, 40 years at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard overhauling nuclear submarines.

Skill levels. The wage survey process itself is a flawed process. When only taking data from companies that volunteer, it pretty much excludes the larger companies, the corporations that may actually have jobs that could be somewhat comparable to the skill level of the wage-grade job you have at nuclear shipyards. So the same problems exist all over the country, and this needs to be dealt with on a broad-base level. So whatever we come up with to work together on this, you know, Labor and Management, I think all the way, you know, we need that diverse perspective right from the beginning on this issue.

So, yeah, I could go on, but I think I made my point that, you know, we need to address the inequities that exist across the country to the Federal Wage System. Thanks.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Paul, thank you very much for that, and I think that the intent is moving forward with understanding the full implications of anything that can be—that is recommended, and as always, one of the reasons that I was very interested in this role was that it is a joint Management-Labor committee, and that every voice carries the same weight and it tries to operate on consensus, tries to work together. So, thank you very much, Paul, for that because it's certainly an approach that I endorse, so thank you.

Jacque and then Ned.

MS. SIMON: I would like to make a formal motion that OPM staff prepare an

analysis for the next meeting for Tobyhanna. If we try to reproduce the very large binder that Mark lifted up, we will not be able to consider this for a very, very long time. It's a big undertaking.

I think that there's no doubt that the data have changed since that study was undertaken, not just pay rates have changed, but the composition of the wage-grade workforce, where it is, and how many people work in different places has obviously changed over the course of time.

Let's just look at Tobyhanna. Tobyhanna, we all know, has the most acute issue. Let's tackle that one first. We can do it in a month, and I would like to request that that examination—and it might not be ready for publication in a peer-reviewed journal by next month, but let's do as much as we can on Tobyhanna before our next meeting so that we make some real progress on at least one element, the most acute problem that we face nationally, which is at Tobyhanna.

MR. ALLEN: I have no concerns about that, Jacque. Ana has already done some preliminary work in that regard. The last study of Monroe County, Pennsylvania, was 2016. We will update employment, the private industry workforce data, and any commuting pattern changes. Of course, commuting patterns are not going to be reflective of the current time because the Census Bureau is not able to keep up that quickly with what's happened with commuting. The commuting would most likely reflect pre-pandemic levels of commuting.

But if all the members agree, we can certainly present something to the committee next meeting. Any objections?

CHAIR LACHANCE: Objections or concerns about Jacque's suggestion? We had—Ned, do you mind holding while Mr. Lynch addresses this particular issue?

MR. GEORGE: No problem, ma'am.

MR. LYNCH: Sorry about that, Ned.

It's not an issue or it's not a concern. It's just, Mark, will that analysis include staffing data from Tobyhanna?

MR. ALLEN: The data that we usually include in the packages don't include things like number of people retired, quit rates, or anything like that. It's really just an analysis of the regulatory criteria as well as a documentation of what we see in the workforce totals for employment, like what grades people are at, what occupations they're in.

We actually provided that information about probably 3 years ago as well. We can dust some of that stuff off as well. We just did not run information on recruitment and retention.

MR. LYNCH: Okay. I think that might be helpful.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Is that doable? Is that doable fairly easily, Mark?

MR. ALLEN: We can try and take a look at it—

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes.

MR. ALLEN: —to see if we then have information like that. Army may want to run their own report on what's been going on at the depot.

MR. LYNCH: Okay. Thanks, Mark.

MR. ALLEN: Got it.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. Back to Ned. Thank you for your patience.

MR. GEORGE: Thank you, everyone. I just wanted to point out a few things. I appreciate what Jacque said, and she's 100 percent correct. But what the last person was speaking, I agree 100 percent. They need to look at the reasons why the people are leaving, and I will tell you that I have that information. Tobyhanna has that information. They have started

something, talking to our employees to find out the reasons why. We know the reasons why, okay?

Yes, we can hire employees here. Yes, we can spend years training them, to lose them to private industry. That's what we were doing. What they need to look into is whether we can hire people at the journeyman rate, at the journeyman level of skills. That, we cannot do.

When we go out on these wage surveys, do you know what we look at?

Warehousing work. There is nothing that correlates into what we do here. Like Jacque said, we need this now. I am passionate about Tobyhanna. I am passionate about the work I do here. I am a veteran myself. The assets that I've worked on, I've seen working in the field, but yet even me, I am looking to leave and get out of here because I could make a lot more money driving a forklift right now than I could do inside of this area. Please help us. Thank you.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you.

Would anyone else like to speak to this issue?

MS. RODGERS: Is this speaking specifically about *Tappahanna*?

CHAIR LACHANCE: Tobyhanna, I believe.

MS. RODGERS: I'm sorry.

CHAIR LACHANCE: No, that's okay. I believe, yes, that's what we're discussing.

MS. RODGERS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. ALLEN: If everybody is okay with this—

MS. SIMON: And what I'd like to say in answer to the question that was just asked, we're specifically talking about Monroe County, Pennsylvania. Tobyhanna Army Depot employees, the wage-grade employees, the Federal employees of Monroe County, Pennsylvania. I don't think there's a VA facility in Monroe County.

Is there, Ned? You would know.

MR. GEORGE: No, there is not. The closest VA is in Wilkes-Barre, and that is Luzerne County.

MS. SIMON: Yeah. And Coatesville, that's scheduled to close, but that's another subject.

Anyway, yeah.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you, Jacque.

MS. SIMON: I don't think VA is affected. It's just—it really is just the Army depot.

MR. ALLEN: Right. That's what I remember from the last report we did, and there may be a National Guard unit in Scranton as well. I'm not absolutely certain about that, but we'll take a look at the whole wage area.

MS. SIMON: Scranton is not in Monroe County, is it?

MR. ALLEN: No.

MS. SIMON: No.

MR. ALLEN: No. But it's part of the—it's the same wage area. So many of these things, we take a look at the whole area for the committee.

MS. SIMON: Right. But we're trying to look at Monroe County all by itself.

MR. ALLEN: We'll have that information for the next committee meeting as long as everybody is okay with us doing that.

I believe the next meeting may be scheduled for May, May 19th.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes. That's true.

MR. ALLEN: Yes.

MS. SIMON: Is that going to be virtual?

MR. ALLEN: What I would suggest is that if anybody wants to come into our conference room, is comfortable with that, you're certainly welcome to do that, but I think for most people, it has to be virtual still.

But, yeah, Jacque, if you want to come here and sit with us, you're welcome to do that—and Rich and anybody else. You're not that far away, right?

CHAIR LACHANCE: I'll be here.

MS. SIMON: Okay.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Good. Okay. So I think we at least have a next step on the lingering issue.

Jacque, does that cover both your items in Old Business and New Business? Are you comfortable with this moving ahead now this way for both those items?

MS. SIMON: Yes, I am.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. Thank you.

You still have another item under Old Business, the letter from the American Federation of Government Employees requesting FPRAC recommend redefining San Joaquin County, California, from the Stockton, California, wage area to the San Francisco, California, wage area and calling for a review of San Joaquin County, California.

Jacque, this is also an issue for AFGE. Can you present it to the committee?

MS. SIMON: It's the same issue, but—I mean, it's definitely number two on the list. After you do Monroe County, please do San Joaquin Valley. If you can do both of them by next month, excellent.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Anyone else on that topic?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. We're getting our list of priorities here.

Next under Old Business is item (c), and that is a letter from the National Association of Government Employees requesting FPRAC reexamine the placement of wage-grade employees working in the Salinas–Monterey area and review of the Salinas–Monterey, California, wage area and to request the abolishment of the Monterey/Salinas wage survey area.

Is there anyone here from NAGE who would like to address this issue and inform the committee about it?

MS. CARMACK: This is Carisa. I'm from NAGE.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great.

MS. CARMACK: I, unfortunately, am not super up to speed on what the issue was at the time, and I know that we wanted to go back and talk with the locals over in that area, just to see what the current issues were since this is old business. So I can work on that, and maybe we can readdress at the next one. You'll have a better update.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great.

MR. ALLEN: Carisa, what I would also suggest is, since there was a great deal of interest in the Topeka, Kansas, VA Medical Center that was dropped from the agenda, without a recommendation coming out of that, you may want to have that one looked at as well.

MS. CARMACK: Okay.

MR. ALLEN: I don't want to kill Ana, but what I guess is over the next couple months, we'd probably have all four of those ready.

MS. CARMACK: Yes.

MR. ALLEN: The last three were refreshed not that long ago, maybe like 3 or 4

years ago. So, if everybody is okay with that, we can start work on those and prioritize things.

Is that okay with you, Janice?

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes, absolutely.

MR. ALLEN: Okay.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Let's keep them moving.

Any other comments on that or that course of action?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: Good. The last item under Old Business is (d), and that is a letter from the Association of Civilian Technicians requesting FPRAC consider moving the Puerto Rico wage area into the Special Appropriated Fund Schedule for the U.S. Insular Areas.

So, if Steve is here from ACT, could you briefly describe this issue and present it to the committee?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: Steve hasn't come on, I guess.

MR. ALLEN: I don't believe—

CHAIR LACHANCE: Steve may not have come on. We'll just keep it on the agenda, I guess, until he comes.

MR. ALLEN: I believe based on prior conversations we've had with ACT is they may have needed to touch base with the local in Puerto Rico anyway on this issue. I don't think they were ready to move forward with this item.

CHAIR LACHANCE: All right. We will keep it on Old Business, and maybe they can connect with their folks and get the information they need to present it to the committee.

So we can now move to New Business, and item (a) under New Business is the

2020 Annual Summary of the committee's work. Hopefully, all of you have had a chance to review it. This is from activity that predates me, but I know some of you were here. So any comments, any discussion? We do want to try to adopt this summary today.

I see a hand, Mark, in the plus 20 there. Is there someone who wants to be recognized? I'm sorry. Our screen is just showing a hand where there's a list of 20 people. I apologize.

Mandy.

MR. ALLEN: Mandy.

MS. LAUGHLIN: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Sorry.

MS. LAUGHLIN: My apologies. I had been trying for a while just to comment on what we had spoken about with Tobyhanna, and it's just taken me this long to make it work.

CHAIR LACHANCE: And I apologize because I just noticed it, but it wasn't connected to a name or a face, so I'm sorry, Mandy.

MS. LAUGHLIN: No, no, no. That's no problem. I just wanted to just let you know that since I'm new to the FPRAC that I am working to regroup concerning Army's stance on the Tobyhanna issue, and we're going to be working with our leadership and with DoD on this. So I just wanted to point that out there.

CHAIR LACHANCE: That's great. That's great. It would be nice to come to resolution on this as soon as we can and clear that Old Business part of the agenda.

MS. LAUGHLIN: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you, Mandy.

MR. ALLEN: Thanks, Mandy.

CHAIR LACHANCE: That's great.

Back to the Annual Summary, are there any objections, any concerns about that report?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. I'm not hearing any.

Is there consensus from both Labor and Management to go ahead and adopt the report?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: I'm going with silence is golden, so thank you all very, very much. Is there somebody who can say "no objection" or that you're okay with it or not or—

MS. SIMON: No objection.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Send up a flare. I don't know.

Thanks, Jacque. Great. I appreciate it.

We have adopted our Annual Summary for 2020. That does go on to the website for the public to review.

Under item (c) under New Business—we can pick up there—are two letters from Mr. Steven Kester regarding the pay disparity between FWS and GS employees at Tobyhanna. We have talked about Tobyhanna, but, Mr. Kester, if you're here or if anyone else would like to comment on these particular letters, you're welcome to.

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: Okay. I think everyone seems comfortable.

MS. SIMON: Wait. Was his letter one of the attachments?

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes, I believe so, was it not?

MR. ALLEN: Yes.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes. There were two letters from him.

MR. ALLEN: Yeah. They were similar to things that he had sent to the committee before.

MS. SIMON: Oh, okay. I see.

MR. ALLEN: These were, I believe, responding to some of the member statements the last couple of meetings.

MS. SIMON: Okay. I saw it. Thanks.

CHAIR LACHANCE: All right. Does anyone have any other issues that they want to bring forward for the committee to address or consider?

MR. ALLEN: I don't have anything else, but I'd like to just say I'm happy to see everybody back and healthy. The OPM staff are going to start coming back to the TRB starting May 2nd, obviously 1 day a week, but I've been coming in for the last month just on Thursdays, and I'll probably keep doing that for next—at least a couple months, I think.

CHAIR LACHANCE: At least on May 19th, and all of you are welcome to join us as well if you want to make the trip into downtown D.C.

MR. ALLEN: I'll also say I haven't missed an FPRAC meeting since 1996, and I don't intend to start now.

CHAIR LACHANCE: That's impressive. It really is.

MS. SIMON: Break a record.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Just being able to sustain that is remarkable.

MS. RODGERS: Hello.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes.

MS. RODGERS: I'd like to—you said we could talk about—so all of this is kind of relative to each other because it's about these prevailing wage rates.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Yes.

MS. RODGERS: This is Margaretta from Tidewater Federal Metal Trades Council.

And some of the issues that I ran into was the fact that we weren't allowed the opportunity to be trained on what our responsibilities are to the OPM process. When I engaged initially and I asked a question about receiving formal training, there is none. There is only training for the data collectors. There is no training for the primary or the alternate that is involved in the local wage survey committee.

So, when I went into my initial meeting, I had an agenda that was kind of shot down by the people who were facilitating the meeting, but everything that I was reading, I was doing so by being self-taught. If I'm going to be responsible for being the primary in a local wage area or prevailing wage area, I want to do my due diligence to the people that I am speaking for. I'm not only speaking for the organization under which I am employed but for all of the people that are in the—the WG workers that are in the locality area that I am primary for, Craney Island, Yorktown, Langley Air Force Base. Norfolk Naval Shipyard is where I am employed, but I'm also doing this for NAVFAC, and I think a whole lot of people really are unknowledgeable about the requirements for the process.

When I walked into it as primary, my obligation, I did not know was two other entities until I started to self-educate, and when I was feeling as if I was floundering and I didn't understand the processes, because everybody was telling me, oh, no, that's not what it means or, no, this is not what this form is for or, no, this is not the correct arena to present your issues, but I

haven't received the ability to present those issues in any arena to this point.

The WG workers in the Virginia Beach locality pay area, I would say, deserve for me to be educated and knowledgeable enough to make these type of decisions for them, and I don't feel like I was afforded that. I did the best that I could with the knowledge that I acquired on my own. It's just a lot of having to be able to understand what the wage system was created for, and the basic way that we're—and the fact that it has deviated from, and I don't understand the deviation, but how do I intercede in the deviation if I don't agree what parameters or what avenues do I have to be able to follow to say, hey, we have these established caps, they prevent the WGs from being able to get—to be able to accomplish a comparable wage?

There's just so much that I learned from reading inside of the actual documents that tell us what we're supposed to be doing. 532.201 all the way down through the whole entire process is telling me all these things that I could do, but nobody has incorporated that to any part of the process that I have utilized. I haven't been able to use any of what I read as a part of the process, and I need to understand why and how do I intercede, how do I present my views as the views of the WG workers in this locality pay area who are underpaid. And I feel like it is a disparate pay treatment, and I don't understand how I can make it better for all of these people because it is a huge responsibility to become the primary for this survey.

But according to the basic survey process that I read, there's nothing that gives me guidance on me, the individual, gaining knowledge to be able to get through what I am trying to get through to accomplish for these people.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Great. Thank you.

I see that both Karl and Chris have their hands up. Which one of you would like to address this issue?

MR. LYNCH: All I was going to do was say that the wage and salary team could give you a hand with that and then introduce you to Mr. Karl Fendt, and he would give you more information. So I'll turn it over to Karl now.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you.

MR. FENDT: Yeah. Thanks so much, Chris, and, Ms. Rodgers, thank you so much for your interest and participation in the wage surveys.

As was stated at the outright, you know, we are very proud about the Management-Union partnership, and I'm actually very excited to hear that you want more information and education. So let me offer up myself and my staff to get you that. So, if you would like, please send me an email, and we can schedule a training session for you and anyone you would like to bring on the process as a whole, and then, of course, we can also tailor it to specifics that you need for your specific wage survey.

MS. RODGERS: I appreciate it.

MR. FENDT: Yeah. Thank you so much.

We love it when people want more information and education. So I'm glad—I'm glad to provide that, and I'm excited that you're so interested.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you.

MS. RODGERS: Our survey is about to transpire the 3rd through the—it's the 3rd through the 13th of this year. So I guess it wouldn't impact this survey. I'm assuming that it wouldn't. I did compile a report. I did a lot of work myself and another fellow Labor partner, Carol Harold from AFGE, and we compiled a report about Norfolk Naval Shipyard itself and incorporated it into the Virginia Beach locality area and what we felt like was a disparate pay.

And I sent it out to Ms. Wlezien, Mr. Poorker. I sent it to Mr. O'Connor. I sent it

to quite a few people that I felt like it would, you know, reach their hands, and we would be able to make a determination. And I know it's not going to be an immediate change, but I do—I do hope that they have received it and at least looked at the report.

MR. FENDT: Okay. Well, we can—oh, I'm sorry.

CHAIR LACHANCE: I'm sorry. I was going to say I see that Paul O'Connor actually held it up to the camera. So I know he has it. Thank you for giving us a glimpse of it.

Karl, I'm sorry. I didn't want to step on you.

MR. FENDT: Oh, no. More than okay.

Yeah. Well, from an education standpoint, I think, you know, if we could be aggressive to get it done before the survey, but even if we can't, I think it would be beneficial to you and, like I said, anyone that you want to help participate as well to learn the process. You know, a lot of our members extend through multiple cycles of the survey. So if we can get you that education and create a partner, a Union partner that goes into the future, that would benefit all of us. So whenever we can get it, we'll work with your calendar to get you that, and if we can do it soon, wonderful, but I think it would be beneficial no matter when we can get it done.

MS. RODGERS: Thank you.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you very much.

MR. ALLEN: What I would also add on to what Karl was saying, there seems to be issues at the local wage survey committee level. There are also issues to be considered at the DoD Wage Committee. There are three different levels of committee involvement between Labor and Management administering the FWS. If there are any issues that would rise to the national level of concern, they could be presented at FPRAC. They just have to come to the committee a week ahead of time so that everybody could be aware of what we're going to be

discussing at the next meeting.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Is there anything else from anyone on the call?

MR. ALLEN: I did also want to note that we have the proposed meeting dates on the—

CHAIR LACHANCE: Mm-hmm, on the agenda.

MR. ALLEN: —bottom of the agenda. They tend to be the third week of each month. What I would suggest is that people take a look at their calendars and see if we're not able to meet those days—since we're doing these meetings virtually, we'll have to put a separate notice for each one in the Federal Register, 15 calendar days prior to the meeting taking place. So OPM staff handles that part of it.

CHAIR LACHANCE: So you all can give us feedback on the scheduling, and we will look into any conflicts or any changes that we have to make, but it looks like May 19th is our next date to gather. I very much appreciate all of you being here. Hopefully, this wasn't too rusty from something that was last held 18 months ago. I do think we've made some progress, and certainly, in May, we'll look to even greater discussion, some action, some conclusions perhaps to some of these issues.

Ms. Griffin, I see your hand is up.

MS. GRIFFIN: Yes. Good morning. Just a quick question. At your last meeting in 2020, there was a discussion about a revision through the 5 CFR 532, the prevailing rate system, and that you may thought about, you know, doing electronic-type data collection. Is this still on the table, or is that thrown out?

MR. ALLEN: That one was resolved by majority vote, and OPM issued a proposed and final regulation. So it's now in effect.

Maybe Karl could speak to the impact of the changes and the regulations that allow for local data collection be handled through electronic means as long as the local wage survey committee agrees to do that by consensus.

MS. GRIFFIN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. FENDT: Yes. Thanks, Mark.

And as Mark stated, that did make it through FPRAC, which we appreciated, because it added a needed flexibility to the survey process. What I would say, to piggyback on Mark's point, is, again, with the Management-Union partnership as our highest priority, we ensure that for every wage survey, we have that LWSC, which local wage survey committee, which is a Management-Union committee. We make sure to have agreement to that alternative collection, and in most of our areas, to give you a more practical implication of how this is playing out, we are now using a hybrid approach. So we are collecting some alternatively and some in person. That does seem to be a good state for us, especially in this COVID climate where the regulations and local restrictions are so flexible.

But, anyway, at this moment, if we do not have that local wage survey committee unanimous agreement for alternative collection, then we default back to the in-person requirement as stated in the regulation.

MS. GRIFFIN: Okay, great. Thank you.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Anything else from anyone?

[No audible response.]

CHAIR LACHANCE: If not, is anyone opposed to adjourning this meeting?

MR. ALLEN: Move to adjourn.

MS. SIMON: Second.

MR. ALLEN: All right.

CHAIR LACHANCE: Thank you. Thanks, everyone. We'll see you in a month.

[End recorded session.]