



COMMISSIONERS' COURT AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: 05/03/2010

Prepared by: Betsy Keller, HR Director

Description:

Report on results from employee cost saving measures survey.

Background:

The hiring freeze committee discussed the value of an employee survey during the County's difficult economic times and during the budget process, Commissioners Court requested a survey be completed to garner employee perspective on cost cutting measures. The survey was completed in March 2010 and the results were reviewed with Commissioners Court on an individual basis in April 2010. The purpose of this report is to share the results with County employees and the public. This report is also available to employees via the County's Intranet.

Survey Results:

Of the 937 survey respondents, 98.6% are full time and 91% are enrolled in the County's health insurance benefits. The largest amount of survey respondents have been with the County for 8 to 19 years (41.1%), followed closely by those who have been with the County for 2 to 7 years (39.8%). The remaining respondents are those with 20 or more years (9.7%) and those with less than 2 years (9.4%).















When asked what cost cutting measures would be preferred to reduce personnel costs, with the opening statement that this survey assumes that Commissioners Court has done everything else it can to help with the budget, survey respondents ranked the choices in the following order:

Preferred Rank	Cost Cutting Options Given	Average Rating
1	Cut all full-time employees to 76 hour pay periods by making Fridays ½ days on alternate Fridays (half of the workforce would be off each Friday afternoon, but the County would remain open).	2.97
2	Furlough (without pay) 12 random days that you select yourself	3.30
3	Furlough (without pay) all holidays	4.48
4	Reduce the amount the County pays of the health insurance premiums via reducing the benefit coverage offered by the plan.	5.05
5	Reduce the amount the County pays of the health insurance premiums (increasing your share of the premiums)	5.11
6	Reduce pay by 5% across the board	5.33
7	Reduce the amount the County pays into the retirement benefit, thus reducing the benefit amount.	5.62
8	Layoff employees	6.49
9	Reduce your position to part time (20 – 29 hours per week), but allow you to keep your benefits	6.65

When asked what type of incentive would motivate eligible employees to retire, the general comments given indicate that none of the options are attractive. However, the respondents ranked the choices as follows:

1. Allow retiree to continue health insurance at current contribution rate for one year for self & dependents.
2. Pay out sick leave accrual (up to 120 hours).
3. Payment equal to 5% of annual salary.

Over 400 respondents provided many ideas & suggestions for the County to consider. Some of the most common are listed below:

-  Approximately 25% of all responses suggested raising taxes.
-  Go to 4 ten hour days like the City to save on bills
-  Have employees turn off their computers except for one night a week for updates
-  Control utility costs better by establishing & enforcing reasonable lighting and temperature standards & hot water temperature in County buildings
-  Apply the burden equally, including to the collective bargaining employees
-  Make sure elected officials also undertake any cuts applied to employees
-  Eliminate all travel funding
-  Raise fees where possible
-  Cut amounts paid to independent contractors, including private attorneys used for public defense
-  Continue to reduce non-mandated programs
-  Review the courts & departments for efficiencies and staffing
-  Deal with poor performers
-  Go paperless, reduce usage of postal mail, reduce supply costs, reduce staffing
-  Sell excess county property

Additionally, over 130 employees are interested in serving on an employee committee to help the County with these types of matters. Human Resources Staff are organizing the structure for this type of committee and will host the first meeting in mid to late May.