



**NOACA HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

May 13, 2025

NOACA Offices

1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio

Present: Please find the attached attendance record.

Mayor Matt Castelli, Chair of HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee, convened the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 8, 2025. Ms. Debbie Berry seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments were made at this meeting.

Chair/Executive Director Report

No report was presented at this meeting.

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Meeting Schedule

Mayor Castelli asked members if they wanted to continue to meet monthly until the hiring of the HR director and afterward meet quarterly.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells stated that the Subcommittee should support onboarding the new HR director, then meet quarterly. She expressed support for filling the position as soon as possible.

Mayor Castelli agreed with Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked Director Gallucci if she planned to provide an update on the status of hiring an HR director under the "Old Business" section of the agenda.

Mayor Castelli invited Director Gallucci to provide an update now.

Status of HR Director Position

Director Gallucci reminded the Subcommittee that she had mentioned at the last meeting that NOACA received over 100 resumes and has contracted with the HR firm Clemans Nelson to manage the hiring process. The firm had narrowed the pool of applicants to 20 candidates and was conducting initial interviews in order to provide a shortlist to NOACA.

Mayor Castelli mentioned that Director Gallucci invited he and Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells to take part in the interviews. He noted that they can discuss additional requirements once the candidate list is finalized and may include more staff in the interview process at that point.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells inquired about the timeline for Clemans Nelson to provide information to NOACA.

Director Gallucci stated that Clemans Nelson began the interview process last week and will provide NOACA with an update once all 20 interviews are completed.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked whether Clemans Nelson had been given a general scope and expressed her desire for NOACA to hire an HR director as soon as possible. She also asked if Clemans Nelson was conducting daily interviews.

Director Gallucci confirmed with Ms. Burt that Clemans Nelson is conducting interviews every day.

Commissioner Richard Regovich asked whether phone interviews were used to narrow the candidate pool down to 20.

Director Gallucci responded that the initial round of interviews was conducted virtually via Zoom.

Commissioner Regovich asked if the next step involves in-person interviews.

Director Gallucci said yes.

Mayor Castelli suggested that Ms. Burt provide an update to the Subcommittee once the candidate pool has been narrowed down to three or four finalists.

Director Gallucci asked Ms. Burt if she knew when the interviews with the 20 candidates would be completed.

Ms. Burt said she would provide Director Gallucci with an update next week.

Mayor Castelli asked whether Clemans Nelson had any recommendations for the next steps in the interview process.

Ms. Burt said yes.

Performance Evaluation Process

Ms. Burt explained that NOACA's annual performance evaluation process begins after the fiscal year ends, usually starting with staff instructions in late June and formally kicking off on July 1. Employees who worked at least six months in the prior fiscal year are eligible. New employees receive six-month reviews after their introductory period.

Ms. Burt presented information on the following:

- Evaluation Form
 - Section I – Performance Objectives

- Section II – Leadership Competencies
- Process – Annual
- Process – 6 months

Mayor Castelli expressed a desire to better understand NOACA's merit increases and pay changes. He asked if NOACA uses a scale based on overall performance ratings to determine the percentage of increases.

Ms. Burt said yes and invited the Finance Director, Ms. Deb Wordell, or Director Gallucci to provide more details.

Ms. Wordell explained that NOACA uses the 3% approved by the Board as a baseline. The average scores serve as the starting point, with equal increments above and below.

Mayor Castelli stated that Ms. Wordell had answered his question.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells confirmed that the Board approves a 3% raise pool and then employees receive raises based on their scores. She asked if there was a minimum score below which employees do not get any raise; for example, if an employee scores a one, would they receive a raise.

Ms. Wordell stated that, based on her experience, no employee has ever not received a raise.

Director Gallucci noted that in the past, some employees' performance was such that they did not receive a raise.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked if it was part of performance management.

Director Gallucci said that was correct.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked whether NOACA requires mandatory training for the performance evaluation process.

Ms. Burt noted that the training was voluntary for employees in the past. She explained that NOACA offers the session as a courtesy to help employees better understand the process and agreed that it should be mandatory.

Mayor Castelli asked what the next steps are for employees who receive a rating of one or two on their evaluation, specifically from a performance management perspective.

Director Gallucci explained that when an employee receives a low evaluation score, NOACA involves its HR consultant and develops a performance improvement plan (PIP) for the employee.

Mayor Castelli asked if an employee who improves significantly within 90 days after a performance improvement plan (PIP) can receive an increase later in the year, or if they lose the chance for an increase until the next cycle.

Director Gallucci stated that the employee would lose the chance for an increase that year; their opportunity would be to improve moving forward.

Ms. Berry asked what happens if there is no significant improvement after the performance improvement plan (PIP), and how long the process typically takes to address ongoing performance issues.

Director Gallucci explained that if an employee shows sufficient improvement or effort, they may be given more time. If they still do not meet expectations after that period, they may be offered a lower-level position (if available) that fits their abilities or face termination.

Commissioner Harrison asked whether NOACA operates on a fiscal year or calendar year.

Director Gallucci responded that NOACA's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

Commissioner Harrison asked if the annual increase has always been 3%.

Director Gallucci said that since she has been at NOACA, the approved raise percentage has consistently been 3%.

Commissioner Harrison asked if the 3% raise is approved at the start of the fiscal year. He also asked about the September timing of the raises and whether the increase is made retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year or if it only starts in September.

Director Gallucci explained that the raise is made retroactive to the start of the fiscal year. Although the average annual raise is 3%, there was one year when staff received a 2% increase, followed by a 4% increase the next year, making those two years an anomaly.

Commissioner Harrison asked whether the six sections of the evaluation form were developed by the previous HR person or if they were internal programs.

Director Gallucci stated that she brought the instrument with her when she took the position at NOACA. Most of the information on the form was originally developed by the RTA, where she helped create it as part of a consultant-led revamp of the HR process. The consultants developed the performance plan and review instrument. NOACA's senior staff reviewed the instrument along with others from ODOT and other organizations, then chose this one with minor adjustments to better fit NOACA's needs.

Commissioner Harrison asked if the plan is for NOACA to move forward with this form, let the new HR Director decide if it's effective, or consider an alternative. He also wanted to know what NOACA staff's perspective was on the evaluation process.

Director Gallucci stated that she expects the form to be evaluated by the new HR director for its effectiveness. While performance reviews are generally well received, there has been ongoing discussion about the scoring system, whether it should be a 3-point, 5-point, or 10-point scale. Despite clear definitions for each score level, concerns persist about the accuracy and the degree of subjectivity versus objectivity in the scoring process.

Commissioner Harrison remarked that the procedure was good. NOACA involves different department heads while maintaining HR-level oversight, making the process as objective as possible despite inherent subjectivity. He noted that the final step is to tie performance scores to merit pay, which allows some flexibility, so a great score one year could become average the next, or vice versa, providing room for adjustment.

Director Gallucci said the scoring was adjusted specifically to reflect the average scores of the current evaluation round.

Mayor Castelli asked whether the scores and percentages for merit increases are consistent across all NOACA divisions.

Director Gallucci explained that, generally, merit increases are consistent across NOACA divisions. In the past, if significant differences arose that could not be resolved during the calibration process, staff created individual scales for each division. This ensured consistency within each division's scoring but not necessarily across the entire organization. She noted this was rare and only used when calibration did not yield a fair and objective outcome.

Ms. Terry clarified that Director Gallucci was referring to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) in Cleveland not the RTA in Chicago.

Director Gallucci said she was referring to GCRTA in Cleveland.

Ms. Terry asked when the performance evaluation instrument Director Gallucci used was created.

Director Gallucci stated that she began using the form when she first arrived at NOACA, and at that time, the form was already 10 years old.

Ms. Terry noted that the language at the bottom of page 13 of the form is standard and clarified that when an employee signs off, it means they have received the information, not necessarily that they agree with it.

Director Gallucci concurred.

Ms. Terry asked if NOACA has an appeal process and specifically wanted to know how disagreements with performance reviews are handled if an employee does not agree with their evaluation.

Director Gallucci said that appeals are rare, but when an employee disagrees with their review, the appeal is brought to her for resolution.

Commissioner Harrison asked about the performance evaluation procedure and whether, under the new structure, it would be managed by the HR director or remain an integral responsibility of the Executive Director.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked Commissioner Harrison if he was referring to the appeal process.

Commissioner Harrison said yes.

Director Gallucci said she believed the matter would require further discussion and consideration.

Commissioner Harrison said he could see the responsibility falling either way, likely depending on the individual in the role.

Mayor Castelli said he believed that the HR director should be involved in the appeal process.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells envisioned a universe where, at the end of the performance management cycle, the HR director submits a report to the Subcommittee detailing that year's process,

including the bell curve, to ensure the outcomes are reviewed. However, for individual appeals, she assumes the Executive Director would be the final decision-maker, which is likely outlined in the employee handbook.

Director Gallucci noted that appeals are very rare and recalled no more than one or two instances during her time at NOACA.

Mayor Castelli inquired whether the 3% applies to the entire organization as a whole and does not exceed or go beyond that percentage.

Director Gallucci confirmed that the 3% is the standard organization-wide increase, but the scale has been as low as 0% and as high as 5%.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked Director Gallucci if she was referring to the percentage applying to each individual employee.

Director Gallucci confirmed that yes, the percentage applies to each individual employee.

Commissioner Regovich asked what percentage of employees, on average, do not receive a 3% increase.

Director Gallucci explained that when using a bell curve, most employees receive around 3%. Some employees may receive slightly more or less, with outliers receiving as much as 4% or 5%, or as little as 1% or 2%.

Mayor Castelli asked whether new hires undergo a different evaluation process or if they are included in NOACA's standard evaluation process.

Ms. Burt stated that NOACA uses the same form for new hires who undergo a six-month evaluation. The evaluation includes the four objectives and the leadership competencies.

Ms. Terry asked whether new hires are eligible for the 3% increase or if there is a waiting period between their hire date and the start of the new fiscal year.

Ms. Burt explained that NOACA provides a prorated raise at the six-month evaluation point for new hires. Then, when employees qualify for the annual raise, it is prorated again based on the time they have worked during the fiscal year.

Commissioner Regovich asked whether new hires have a 90-day or six-month evaluation period.

Director Gallucci confirmed it is six months.

Commissioner Regovich asked if the six-month period is the probationary period.

Director Gallucci confirmed that it is.

Mayor Castelli asked if it is officially called a probationary period.

Director Gallucci said it is referred to as an introductory period.

Ms. Terry asked if new hires can take vacation during this period.

Director Gallucci confirmed that new employees can take any leave they have earned.

Executive Session

No executive session was held at this meeting.

Reports/Updates

No reports or updates were presented at this meeting.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

No new business was discussed at this meeting.

Adjournment

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:35 p.m. Commissioner Harrison seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Note: Additional information on this meeting can be found on [NOACA's website](#) or on [NOACA's YouTube channel](#).

DRAFT



**NOACA HR, Personnel and Organizational Development Subcommittee
2025 Attendance Record**

MEMBER	2/11/25	2/25/25	3/11/25	4/8/25	5/13/25
CASTELLI, Matt	X	X	X	X	X
DREYFUSS-WELLS, Kyle	X	X	X		X
GALL, John	X	X	X	X	
HARRISON, Aaron					X
REGOVICH, Richard	X	X	X		X
RONAYNE, Chris (Ex Officio) <i>Debbie Berry, Alternate</i>	X	A	X		A
TAYLOR, Katie	X	X	X	X	X
TERRY, India Birdsong		X	X	X	X