



NOACA HR, Personnel and Organizational Development Subcommittee

February 11, 2025
NOACA Offices
1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Mayor Matt Castelli, Chair of the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee, convened the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No one signed in to speak at this meeting.

Chair's Report

Mayor Castelli invited County Executive Chris Ronayne to start the meeting.

County Executive Ronayne thanked Mayor Castelli for agreeing to be the Chair and Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells for assuming the Vice Chair position of the Subcommittee. County Executive Ronayne also thanked Director Grace Gallucci for helping the Subcommittee get to this point and Ms. Liz Barlik for helping with the team. He also thanked Mr. Matt Dooley.

County Executive Ronayne expressed enthusiasm for the Subcommittee's work and presented several goals for its work. After becoming the new Board President in January, he aimed to establish the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee. He praised Trustee Brandon's leadership as previous Board President and noted a presentation made by OE Strategies ("OE") at the January Board meeting, which focused on organizational health and development—key areas he hoped the Subcommittee would address. He referenced discussions from the previous year regarding mapping NOACA's HR functions to optimize reporting channels and support Director Gallucci and her team.

He noted that Director Gallucci would present considerations for the Subcommittee regarding HR staffing, evaluating whether to continue with consultants, hire an in-house HR person, or adopt a hybrid approach.

County Executive Ronayne stated that Mayor Castelli was selected as the chair of the Subcommittee due to his HR background. He also noted that some members present had participated in last year's discussions on HR matters, focusing on how to establish a strong foundation for success in organizational development and HR functions with Director Gallucci and her team.

County Executive Ronayne also thought there was a need for a group between the Executive Committee and Director Gallucci to assist in developing performance goals and measures for the NOACA CEO. A framework has already been provided to the Subcommittee, and Director Gallucci has offered feedback and guidance on how she would like her performance to be evaluated. He highlighted the importance of clarity in performance expectations, as it helps individuals understand how they are being assessed and how those measures function.

County Executive Ronayne emphasized the Executive Committee's intent to collaborate with the Subcommittee to establish a strong HR framework, performance measures, and standards. The goal is to create a comprehensive, 360-degree conversation rather than a strict top-down approach. He expressed hope that the Subcommittee would align with this vision, ensuring that objectives are achieved through a more bottom-up strategy that supports organizational goals. He encouraged the Subcommittee to consider these priorities in light of OE Strategies' recommendations, stressing the importance of implementation. He noted that having a plan is one thing, but it is essential to actively use it rather than letting it sit on a shelf. Reviewing OE's work would be a valuable step in this process.

County Executive Ronayne recommended collaborating with Director Gallucci and a smaller subgroup of the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee to develop HR performance measures and a framework. He believed this approach would be both beneficial and timely. The Subcommittee should work with Director Gallucci to determine the most effective HR methodology for an organization of NOACA's size—whether it should be managed in-house, through ongoing consultancy, or a hybrid model. While he had his own perspective on the matter, he expressed interest in hearing the views of other members.

As Board President of NOACA, County Executive Ronayne aimed to foster a healthy organization through long-term organizational development, recognizing that NOACA already has a strong foundation to build upon. He expressed appreciation for Director Gallucci's efforts in setting her own goals and objectives, which were available for the Subcommittee to review. He also acknowledged Director Gallucci's leadership in bringing an organizational development specialist, like OE, into the discussion. Additionally, he commended her efforts in developing an HR generalist position, which she planned to review with the Subcommittee during the meeting.

County Executive Ronayne stated that if the Subcommittee made strong progress on the three referenced goals for the 2025 calendar year, it would provide a solid start for the year.

Executive Director's Report

Director Gallucci expressed her gratitude to President Ronayne and Chairman Castelli, acknowledging their support. She emphasized the importance of the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee, highlighting that NOACA's success depends on its talent. She looked forward to collaborating with Subcommittee members and appreciated their time and dedication, recognizing their busy schedules. She thanked them for their commitment to NOACA and for providing her with valuable advice, guidance, and a path forward.

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Charter Development

Director Gallucci explained that NOACA has a charter for every committee, subcommittee, and council, and a draft charter for this Subcommittee was included in the meeting packet. She and Ms. Liz Barlik collaborated on its creation to ensure it aligned with the Subcommittee's vision for the organization. She explained that currently, the Subcommittee is classified as a special subcommittee under NOACA's regulations, but it may become a permanent entity in the future. Regardless of its status, she emphasized that having a charter remains valuable for guiding its work.

Director Gallucci discussed the following:

- The purpose of the Subcommittee - provided by Cuyahoga County
- Meeting Schedule
- Agendas, minutes, and staffing

Mayor Castelli recommended that NOACA staff begin by focusing on the three goals outlined by County Executive Ronayne. He also welcomed input from Subcommittee members.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells agreed with Mayor Castelli's comment.

For clarification, Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells stated the following goals:

1. Look at that report from OE to review and select organizational development recommendations from the report.
2. Establish an HR function within NOACA
3. Formalize the performance management process within the organization

County Executive Ronayne agreed, emphasizing that his discussions with Director Gallucci before the meeting reinforced the importance of an ongoing organizational development review. He noted that the OE review does not need to be limited to a fixed timeframe, as continuous evaluation provides a strong foundation for growth. If the Subcommittee becomes permanent, it would serve as a valuable resource for Director Gallucci and her leadership team, offering a structured way to engage with the Board on HR matters. He expressed his preference for keeping the OE review fluid, ensuring it supports long-term organizational development rather than being confined to a single review period.

Director Gallucci agreed.

County Executive Ronayne said he did not think the Subcommittee needed to name them in their goals but rather as an ongoing interface with NOACA's organizational development function.

Mayor Castelli suggested that the first item on the agenda for the next meeting should be a deep dive into the recommendations, focusing on developing and formalizing action plans around them.

County Executive Ronayne emphasized that the focus should not be solely on a singular performance review of the CEO but rather on overall performance management and evaluation across the organization.

Director Gallucci asked whether it would be accurate to characterize the Subcommittee's functions as advisory.

County Executive Ronayne encouraged members to consider best practices that NOACA should prioritize.

Commissioner Regovich agreed that the three goals discussed in the meeting provided a strong starting point.

Mayor Castelli stated that specific language would be drafted for the goals, and the Subcommittee would review and discuss them.

Meeting Schedule

Director Gallucci asked for input on the frequency of Subcommittee meetings and suggested scheduling them on Fridays without conflicting meetings to align with NOACA's schedule. After discussion, the Subcommittee agreed to hold meetings on Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m.

The Subcommittee discussed the meeting frequency and agreed to start with biweekly meetings, then transition to monthly meetings for a period, and eventually move to a quarterly schedule.

Overview of HR at NOACA

Director Gallucci explained that NOACA has a fairly standard HR process in place and she had expanded on what was in place when she started at NOACA. The Administrative Services Division, led by Director Ms. Lindy Burt, oversees HR functions. Employees can bring their HR concerns to Ms. Burt, who will assess the situation and determine the appropriate course of action. She may address the issue herself or refer it to one of NOACA's HR consultants. If employees are uncomfortable approaching Ms. Burt directly, they have the option to contact the HR consultants directly instead. NOACA worked with two HR consultants, one focuses on recruitment and the other specializes in employee discipline and FMLA-related matters, as the organization lacks in-house expertise in these areas.

Director Gallucci stated that when she first arrived at NOACA, the Director of Finance and Operations was responsible for HR, and there was no HR consultant in place.

Director Gallucci explained that she strengthened NOACA's HR function by bringing in consultants with specialized expertise. One consultant focused on recruitment and shared their knowledge with Ms. Burt, who is now capable of handling recruitment tasks. However, because recruitment is time-consuming and not Ms. Burt's sole responsibility, staff identified it as an area for improvement. This need led to the consideration of a dedicated position to manage multiple aspects of HR more effectively.

Mayor Castelli asked if one of the HR consultants handled talent acquisition and the other handled employee relations.

Director Gallucci said yes.

Mayor Castelli asked if the employee relations consultant would follow up with concerns.

Director Gallucci confirmed that staff could directly contact the consultant responsible for employee relations. She noted that the consultant had office hours at NOACA and was also available by phone or email.

Director Gallucci stated that performance management at NOACA is now overseen by Ms. Burt and an HR consultant. The consultants have worked with staff to assist employees in developing

their performance plans and reviews in collaboration with their supervisors. Additionally, the consultants administer the annual performance review process to ensure consistency and alignment with organizational goals.

Mayor Castelli inquired about the background of the HR consultants.

Director Gallucci stated that one consultant is an HR generalist, while the other is an HR attorney and HR specialist.

Director Gallucci explained that NOACA had previously paid a fee to Cuyahoga County to access their HR services, which included the two consultants. When the arrangement with Cuyahoga County ended NOACA continued its relationship with the two consultants. However, the contract for one of the consultants has recently ended, meaning NOACA must decide whether to renew the contract or pause until the HR generalist position is finalized.

Commissioner Regovich shared that in Lake County, two staff members manage day-to-day HR operations. When more complex or specialized issues arise, particularly legal matters, the County consults an external expert. However, the consultant works directly with the HR staff rather than interacting with all employees.

Mayor Castelli asked for Ms. Burt's title.

Director Gallucci stated that Ms. Burt's title is the Director of Administrative Services.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked the number of NOACA employees.

Director Gallucci stated that NOACA has a budget for 47 employees, including herself.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked how many employees there are currently at NOACA.

Director Gallucci said 40.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked Ms. Burt the number of employees in the Administrative Services Division.

Ms. Burt mentioned that the Administrative Services Division is staffed by four employees: two in IT, one receptionist, and one part-time building and maintenance worker.

Mayor Castelli asked Ms. Burt about the amount of time she spends on HR generalist functions.

Ms. Burt said that it ebbs and flows but generally 5-10 hours per week.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells noted that it seemed like Ms. Burt was managing recruitment, which is a full-time job. She then asked Ms. Burt if she was also responsible for performance management.

Ms. Burt confirmed that she handles performance management, coordinating the process with NOACA's other directors and staff. She added that every July, NOACA relies on one of its consultants to assist in reviewing and calibrating all performance evaluations.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells suggested that a presentation on performance management be given at a future Subcommittee meeting. This would allow members to better understand the process and

gain insight into employees' experiences throughout the year from a performance management perspective.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked Ms. Burt about succession planning, employee advancement, and training opportunities for employees at NOACA.

Ms. Burt stated that NOACA allocates funding in its budget for professional development. Employees can access these funds on an as-needed basis for skill enhancement. Additionally, NOACA provides agency-wide training on compliance and has budgeted resources to support staff with trade association dues, professional memberships, and certifications. She also noted that NOACA's HR policy manual includes a section on tuition reimbursement.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked who at NOACA is responsible for compliance tasks, such as managing Form I-9.

Ms. Burt explained that NOACA's Finance Division is responsible for coordinating the benefits enrollment process, not the Administrative Services Division.

Director Gallucci explained that Ms. Burt manages personal leave, such as FMLA. Meanwhile, the Finance Division handles medical benefits and tracks vacation and sick time within the payroll system. Additionally, the Finance Division oversees ADP, NOACA's Human Resource System (HRS).

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells asked if NOACA's payroll is maintained by ADP.

Director Gallucci said yes, under Ms. Deb Wordell, NOACA Finance Director, works directly with ADP.

Mayor Castelli suggested that the Subcommittee review the entire employee life cycle to gain a clearer understanding of current processes and identify any potential gaps in performance management.

Director Gallucci explained that every NOACA employee undergoes an annual performance review and performance plan. NOACA utilizes an evaluation instrument originally obtained from GCRTA, which was modified to fit NOACA. This instrument is completed once a year as a performance plan, guiding employees toward their goals. While formal annual reviews take place, supervisors are also expected to have regular discussions with their employees as needed, depending on the role. The instrument outlines four key objectives for each employee, along with metrics to measure progress. It also includes competency assessments. Director Gallucci noted that this document was sent to the Subcommittee last week for review.

Commissioner Regovich noted that retention is likely one of NOACA's biggest challenges. He asked how the organization could improve talent retention.

Director Gallucci acknowledged that NOACA has struggled with employee retention since COVID and emphasized the need to better understand how to keep talent. One major challenge was salary competitiveness, but with the Board's support, NOACA conducted a compensation study and allocated additional funds to address salary inequities. Another issue was organizational development (OD). Over the past year, NOACA addressed these concerns by hiring an OD specialist to work with staff, conduct surveys, and develop recommendations for improvement.

County Executive Ronayne asked whether the contracts for the HR consultants are still active.

Director Gallucci stated that one HR consultant's contract is still active, while the other contract, for a legal HR consultant, became inactive a month ago. The contract for the second consultant is currently on pause until NOACA determines the best path forward for the position.

HR Generalist Position

Director Gallucci stated that a draft job description for an HR generalist was included in the meeting packet for review.

Director Gallucci stated that NOACA initially considered hiring a part-time HR generalist due to challenges in the job market and past organizational issues. However, after further evaluation, staff determined that a full-time position would be more suitable, ensuring consistent availability and support for employees.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells inquired about the salary range NOACA was considering for the HR generalist position.

Ms. Burt stated that the salary for the HR generalist position would be around \$75,000.

Mayor Castelli asked why the HR generalist position was classified as nonexempt.

Ms. Burt said she did not know if the job would qualify as an exempt position.

Mayor Castelli emphasized that for NOACA to have a competent employee relations professional, the organization needs someone with experience in independently navigating challenges within the organization. If NOACA must train and closely manage the individual, it would defeat the purpose of hiring a professional. He stressed that NOACA should offer a competitive salary to attract a true business partner who can effectively support directors and staff.

Director Gallucci stated that the initial responsibilities and level of the HR generalist position were based on recommendations from the consultant. She noted that staff would need to further evaluate the position to ensure it aligns with NOACA's needs.

Ms. Katie Taylor asked whether the inactive consultant was an attorney.

Director Gallucci said yes.

Ms. Taylor asked whether the HR generalist position would replace the inactive consultant.

Director Gallucci stated that the HR generalist would replace both consultants.

Ms. Taylor asked whether NOACA would need to consult another attorney for legal HR matters.

Director Gallucci clarified that NOACA uses Dooley Gembala for legal matters, as the firm has expertise in HR services. She explained that the inactive HR consultant was not acting as NOACA's attorney on HR issues but rather provided HR-related support. NOACA still relied on its outside legal counsel for any legal HR matters.

Mayor Castelli stated that the HR generalist would assume the responsibilities of one HR consultant, while Dooley Gembala would handle all employment law issues.

Mr. Gembala explained that his firm focuses on the procedural aspects of HR, whereas an in-house HR professional handles day-to-day tasks. He stated that Dooley Gembala ensures compliance with state laws and regulations and provides advisory services.

Commissioner Regovich asked whether Dooley Gembala handles workers' compensation and theft issues or if the firm strictly serves as a consultant.

Mr. Gembala explained that his firm supports public and private sector clients based on their needs and feasibility. Typically, cases are reviewed internally to decide whether they can be managed in-house or if external legal counsel should be engaged.

Mayor Castelli asked whether Dooley Gembala has employment law attorneys on staff.

Mr. Gembala confirmed that Dooley Gembala has employment law attorneys and stated that a significant portion of the firm's practice focuses on employment law, particularly for public sector clients.

County Executive Ronayne reflected on discussions that occurred during the procurement process for new legal services, where Dooley Gembala was ultimately selected. He recalled that when the question of employment law arose, the Executive Committee revisited the firm's qualifications and confirmed that they do specialize in employment law—which he considered a fortunate and valuable discovery. He emphasized that this was an important factor in the conversation, especially when considering a potential shift in HR consulting services. With Ms. Burt, Dooley Gembala, the HR generalist, and Director Gallucci working together, NOACA appears to have a strong team in place to handle HR matters effectively.

Director Gallucci suggested that it would be helpful if members could share job descriptions for HR generalist roles from their own organizations to assist in the hiring process.

Mayor Castelli expressed interest in understanding what NOACA's directors are seeking in an HR partner.

Commissioner Regovich said he really liked the direction of the discussion. He noted the benefits of having a full-time HR generalist in-house who could focus on retention, recruitment, and taking care of day-to-day issues and be available to employees.

County Executive Ronayne agreed with Commissioner Regovich, emphasizing the importance of having an in-house HR generalist who understands the work environment, people-to-people relationships, and the significance of proximity. He supported the idea of the Subcommittee members providing NOACA with a job description. Ronayne shared his experience with a similar-sized organization of about 60 employees, where an in-house HR generalist was crucial. This HR generalist, reporting to the finance director, was familiar with the workplace climate and could address issues proactively, rather than reacting to crises. He noted that this model suits NOACA's size and complexity, especially given the workload and the need to maintain a positive organizational climate.

Mayor Castelli asked Director Gallucci if she wanted to present any additional information.

Director Gallucci stated that the agenda items presented were intended to provide insight into how the HR function is currently operating and to highlight some of the issues they aim to address.

Executive Session

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion for the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee to adjourn to executive session pursuant to 121.22(G)(1) to discuss the compensation and performance of the Executive Director. Commissioner Regovich seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was conducted, and the motion to adjourn to executive session was unanimously approved.

Ms. Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion for the HR, Personnel, and Organizational Development Subcommittee to exit the executive session. Mr. Gall seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Reports/Updates

No reports/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 4:06 p.m. Mr. Gall seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Note: Additional information on the agenda items can be found on [NOACA's website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).



NOACA HR, Personnel and Operational Development Subcommittee 2025 Attendance Record

MEMBER	2/11/25	2/25/25	3/11/25	3/25/25
CASTELLI, Matt	X			
DREYFUSS-WELLS, Kyle	X			
GALL, John	X			
HARRISON, Aaron				
REGOVICH, Richard	X			
RONAYNE, Chris	X			
TAYLOR, Katie	X			
TERRY, India Birdsong				