

FEDERAL PREVAILING RATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

612th FPRAC

SHELDON FRIEDMAN, Chairperson, Presiding

Thursday, May 19, 2016

Room 5526
Office of Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415**ATTENDANCE:****Members/Alternates:**Management Members:Mark Allen, OPM
Jim Davey, DoD
Jason Munro, Air Force
Gary Buck, Army
Arleen Romba, VA (via phone)Labor Members:Dennis Phelps, MTD
Candace Archer, AFGE
Jacque Simon, AFGE (via phone)
Robert Shore, NAGE**Staff Specialists and Visitors:**Jeanne Jacobson, Designated Federal Officer, OPM
Madeline Gonzalez, OPM
Kristen Foy, OPM
Jim Brady, DoD
Karen Kurian, DoD**Recording Secretaries:**Mike Eicher, OPM
Ana Paunoiu, OPM

[Transcript prepared from digital audio produced by FPRAC.]

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
I. <u>Opening/Announcements</u>	
• Introductions.....	3
• Announcements.....	4
– 2016 Review of Labor Membership on the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee, 612-OC-1	
II. Review of the Minutes of the 611th Meeting.....	4
III. Old Business.....	4
a. Review of Green County, Missouri, 607-OPM-3	
b. Letter from the National Association of Government Employees, Dated March 9, 2016, Requesting FPRAC Reexamine the Placement of Wage Grade Employees Working in Shawnee County, KS, 611-NAGE-1	
IV. New Business.....	5
Review of Shawnee County, Kansas, 612-MGT-1	

P R O C E E D I N G

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our 612th meeting of the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee. My name is Sheldon Friedman, Chair of the Committee. And as usual, I would appreciate if we could go around the room and have the members of the Committee introduce themselves. Let's start with you, Dennis, today.

MR. PHELPS: Dennis Phelps with Metal Trades Department.

MR. SHORE: Robert Shore with the National Association of Government Employees.

MR. ALLEN: Mark Allen with OPM.

MR. DAVEY: Jim Davey with DoD.

MR. MUNRO: Jason Munro with Air Force.

MR. BUCK: Gary Buck, Army.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: And I think we have two members on the phone. Could you introduce yourselves, please?

MS. SIMON: [via telephone] This is Jacque Simon, AFGE.

MS. ROMBA: [via telephone] And Arlene Romba with VA.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. And I'd appreciate it if everyone else in the room today could also introduce themselves. Brenda?

MS. JACOBSON: Jeanne. Jeanne Jacobson.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Oh, I'm sorry. I need new glasses. I'm sorry, Jeanne.

MS. JACOBSON: Jeanne Jacobson, Designated Federal Officer.

MR. BRADY: Jim Brady, DoD.

MS. KURIAN: Karen Kurian, DoD.

MR. EICHER: Mike Eicher, OPM.

MS. GONZALEZ: Madeline Gonzalez with OPM.

MS. FOY: Kristen Foy, OPM.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Well, there's only one announcement that I have. You have in your packets the review of the Labor membership on FPRAC. I think everyone knows there's a requirement in the law that the Labor membership must be reviewed every 2 years to make sure that it accurately reflects the distribution of representation of FWS employees among the different unions, and OPM staff did that update recently. No change in representation is indicated as a result of that analysis, and you have the memo on that approved by our Acting Director in your packet. Any question about that?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Are there any other announcements?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Hearing no other announcements, we'll move on to review of the transcript of our March meeting. Are there any other changes to the transcript beyond those that we've heard from you about already?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: If not, is there any objection to adopting the transcript of our March meeting?

MS. SIMON: [via telephone] No.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Hearing no objection, the transcript is adopted.

That brings up Old Business. What I would suggest on item (a), unless people want to discuss it this time, is there any interest in discussing item (a), review of Green County,

Missouri, 607-OPM-3?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: What I would suggest is we, at our next meeting, consider tabling that one if there is no interest in discussing it further. We could always bring it back another time.

MR. ALLEN: Yeah. And from my perspective, that would be fine.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. So why don't we next month consider tabling it, and then that brings up item (b), which is also connected to our New Business item. And that's the situation of Shawnee County, Kansas, regarding the letter we got from the National Association of Government Employees, 611-NAGE-1, and then the staff analysis of this issue, 612-MGT-1.

Why don't we begin, Mark, with your summary of 612-MGT-1?

MR. ALLEN: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Under 612-MGT-1, OPM staff undertook a review of Shawnee County, Kansas, based on the interest expressed by the National Association of Government Employees at the March 17th, 2016, FPRAC meeting.

Shawnee County is sort of synonymous with Topeka, Kansas, and we have under the Federal Wage System a separate wage area for Kansas City and a separate wage area for Topeka. The main reason for which there's been a separate wage area for the Topeka area is because of Fort Riley, which is in a fairly rural area, and it's fairly close to the City of Topeka. There's also a VA Medical Center that is located in Topeka, and that is the location where employees have expressed an interest in seeing whether it's possible to be part of the Kansas City wage area.

The Topeka wage area is one of the original Federal Wage System wage areas when the Federal Wage System was established in 1972. The Management members have taken a look at the regulatory criteria for defining Federal Wage System wage areas, and based on the analysis contained in 612-MGT-1, the Management members do not see a compelling reason to abolish the Topeka wage area or to define Shawnee County to a different wage area than the one it's already in.

On page 2, there's some information about the continued viability of the Topeka wage area. There are still around 700 employees under the Federal Wage System in the wage area, and there's also some information at the bottom of page 2 about the survey adequacy requirements having been met consistently in the past.

On page 3, you will see an identification of where employees are, what agencies they're working for in Shawnee County, and you'll see that there's a National Guard unit there with Air Force and Army employees. The Department of the Interior has two employees, and the Department of Veterans Affairs has 114. There are about 300 employees who are also located at Fort Riley.

There don't appear to be any Metropolitan Statistical Area issues at this time with the Topeka wage area.

On page 5, we've received some input from local Department of Veterans Affairs management officials responding to some of the questions that local employees represented by the National Association of Government Employees have raised, but basically, what those statements indicate is that local management at the VA in the Topeka VA Medical Center don't believe that there is much interaction among Federal Wage System workforces between the Topeka VA Medical Center and the Leavenworth VA Medical Center.

And so we've got a couple of maps as the first attachment and then an analysis of the regulatory criteria. That basically covers this document.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Mark.

We've got a new arrival of a Committee member. Candace, would you introduce yourself for the recorder, please?

MS. ARCHER: Candace Archer, AFGE. My apologies for being late. Traffic was terrible.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. We're glad you made it.

So any questions or discussion? Rob, I'll give you the first shot, if you want.

MR. SHORE: Okay, thank you. In regards to the VA's, I guess, responses to the concerns raised by the employees, what I'd like is the opportunity to follow up with them and possibly—there was a couple of particular employees who brought the concerns to our attention—see their responses, and if helpful, I will see if they would be available by telephone at the next meeting or come up personally, whatever is appropriate.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: That would be very helpful because it's troubling that there are such discrepancies between the concerns you brought to our attention versus what the local management appears to be saying. Thank you.

Any other questions or discussion at this time? I have a couple questions, but I'll wait until everybody else has had their say. Nothing else?

MR. DAVEY: One comment I'd like to make—this is Jim Davey. Am I correct, Mark, that Shawnee Country is part of the Topeka MSA, and if we separate it, we would be splitting an MSA?

MR. ALLEN: Yes.

MR. DAVEY: Is Fort Riley part of the Topeka MSA?

MR. ALLEN: Fort Riley is not with the MSA where Shawnee is.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: It is not.

MR. ALLEN: The Topeka MSA is five counties, and those are in green color.

Fort Riley is in the Manhattan, KS MSA, and that is a separate metropolitan area. Fort Riley is in Geary County and in part of Riley County. Geary County is also a survey county, but not a metropolitan county.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything else?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: A question on page 7, summary table, similarities in overall population and private sector employment, et cetera. I am curious about something. If you look at page 3 and attachment 2 where you have breakdowns by county, you have a little table with data on population and workforce. It's stated in the report that Shawnee County resembles the Topeka survey area more than it resembles the Kansas City survey area but if you look at population, 177,934 for Shawnee versus 61,929 for Topeka survey area and 235,788 for Kansas City survey area, similarly for workforce, 75,553 for Shawnee County versus 22,097 for Topeka survey area and 107,757 for the Kansas City survey area—I look at those numbers and would say that Shawnee County resembles the Kansas City survey area more than the Topeka survey area. I'm wondering how the opposite conclusion was reached on that.

MR. ALLEN: What it actually reflects is primarily that Shawnee County looks more like itself than the Kansas City survey area because Shawnee County is the dominant population county and workforce population county in the Topeka survey area, so that would be a population of 177,000. And then if we look at the average population for the Topeka survey

area, it would be around 62,000.

And then, when we look at the Kansas City survey area, Jackson County, MO, would be the largest county with a population of 674,000. Johnson County, KS, would have a population of 544,000. So the analysis just reflects that Kansas City is a bigger city than Topeka.

MR. PHELPS: It would seem to me what Sheldon was saying is correct, though, that Shawnee County would better match the counties in the Kansas City wage area than it does the counties in the Topeka wage area. Aside from Shawnee County, they're small.

MR. ALLEN: Yeah, I understand that perspective, but we generally do an analysis of the survey area which would include in a lot of cases the entire metropolitan area, and Shawnee County is part of the Topeka metropolitan area. And as such, it shouldn't be looked at in isolation. It's also part of a survey area and should not be looked at in isolation when wage data are collected from the entire survey area.

MR. PHELPS: That seems counter to me, though, the arguments that you make, like for moving a county in Pennsylvania into the New York wage area on what the AFGE had proposed to do.

MS. ARCHER: Tobyhanna.

MR. PHELPS: That is counter to the argument you made not to do that. How can we have it one way for one place and the opposite way for a different place?

MR. ALLEN: They are two completely different situations. In the Scranton wage area, we were looking at two metropolitan statistical areas, Monroe County being in a separate metropolitan statistical area. In this instance, we're looking at the Topeka metropolitan statistical area, which consists of five counties.

MR. PHELPS: But then you also have the Kansas City metropolitan statistical

area, right, that we're looking at?

MR. ALLEN: Yes.

MR. PHELPS: Should we still have two metropolitan statistical area? I don't see the difference. If we're looking at two metropolitan statistical areas, why are we making different arguments for one than you are for the other?

MR. DAVEY: I don't understand the different argument. It seems that it is the same argument.

MR. PHELPS: To me, it sounds like it's an opposite argument.

MR. DAVEY: I may not remember the argument correctly, but was that Monroe County in Pennsylvania does not resemble the New York wage area at all, and Shawnee County doesn't resemble Kansas City either? To me, it's the same argument. That's all.

MR. PHELPS: Well, but it would seem to me, though, that by looking at the population in here that Shawnee County much more resembles the Kansas City wage area counties than it does the other Topeka area counties.

MR. ALLEN: Yes, but to arrive at that conclusion, one would have to assume that Shawnee County didn't exist in itself, but it's the core part of the Topeka metropolitan area, and I don't think it's really appropriate to say that when we're trying to determine a local wage area for prevailing rate purposes that—

MR. PHELPS: Rather than argue the point any further, I think once we hear from the people that NAGE wants to bring up, it might be more appropriate continue the discussion. It just seems to me that the point that Sheldon brought up seems to fit this area, and the argument that we made for the county in Pennsylvania moving to New York was just the opposite of what this one is. But I guess we can at the next meeting, whenever, get in further discussion on it,

rather than take the time up today.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything further on this one now? I'm going to hold my other questions until we get further input.

MR. ALLEN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Well, I'm not aware of any other New Business item, but if anyone has one, this would be the time to bring it up.

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: No? All right. Well, if there is no further new business, it would be in order for us to adjourn. Any objection to our doing that?

MR. ALLEN: No objection.

MR. PHELPS: None here.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Hearing no objection, we are adjourned, and have a good month, everybody.