

Texas Forest Service Employee Advisory Council
Minutes From
April 28, 2009
College Station, Texas
Website: [TFS Employee Advisory Council](#)

Members Attending:

West Zone:

Rob Grotty: Urban/Oak Wilt
Andy Larson: At-Large
Jason Keiningham: At Large, West Zone

East Zone:

John Rush: Central Region
Jake Donellan: At-Large
Philip Gates: At-Large

College Station:

Lisa Heffer: FIAD/Dir's Office
James Polasek: FIAD/Dir's Office
Michelle Gonzales: FRD
Curt Stripling FRP

Members Absent with Notification:

Shane Brown: West Zone, Regional Fire
Russell Lykins: North Region
Susan Cornett: North Region
Twanisha Bennett: Central Region
Preston Williams: East Zone, South Region
Doris Long: East Zone, South Region

Members Absent without Notification: None

Ex-Officio Members Present: Stacy Overby

Guests Present: Bill Oates
Sam Lewis

James Polasek, EAC Chair, called the EAC meeting to order at 10:03am.

1. **Review of minutes from the January 22, 2009 EAC Meeting:** The minutes from the January 22, 2009 EAC meeting were reviewed by the Council. These minutes were approved on 2/09.

2. **Updates to Working Issues:**

The Council reviewed the following working issues:

- a. **Uniform Items:** Low profile TFS hat is being added to uniform listing. Water repellant jacket is being researched as part of the uniform. Special size boots, i.e. sizes below size 4 can now be special ordered through Lion Apparel. We asked Jake Donellan to have his folks provide us feedback once their new boots arrive.
- b. **TFS Honor Guard:** Chair, James Polasek, asked Shane Brown, Jake Donellan, Phillip Gates, and Rob Grotty to form subcommittee to identify all requirements that are needed to stand up an Honor Guard for TFS.

3. **New Items:**

- a. **Holiday Issue Schedule:** Issue sent in suggest that an opportunity exists to modify future holiday schedules for field and College Station staff with the logic of improving consistency and efficiency within the agency, and also filling the lengthy gap of holidays from Independence Day to Thanksgiving. Under the suggested approach the entire agency would observe Good Friday and Labor Day in place of the staggered Spring Break observations. The person submitting this idea believes the current staggered Spring Break approach decreases agency efficiency as field support is unavailable when College Station staff is out (IR,HR,RFD, etc.), and conversely a negative affect results on College Station staff when field staff is off and unavailable for communication. In addition, this person identifies a lengthy period of time in which holidays are not available, early July to late November. The suggested holiday schedule modification would fill this gap through the observation of Labor Day (in September). This person feels many governmental agencies, private sector companies, and schools observe Labor Day. Therefore, it's their perception TFS families could benefit from observing Labor Day as many spouses/significant others are already off, and many schools are out on that day. Lastly, new employees who start during the Summer do not get a holiday until Thanksgiving, and they are not allowed to utilize time earned until after six months of service. An observation of the Labor Day Holiday would allow new employees an opportunity to enjoy a holiday during this period in which they are unable to take time off. EAC members were asked to get a

sensing from their constituents from their regions to see if they support this idea or it doesn't matter to them.

- b. **Merit Raises:** Anonymous person raised an issue. Person believes that Interim Director should tell them why they can't get a raise even when they continue to receive "exceed expectations" on their appraisal. Anonymous person said that supervisor won't tell them why. EAC unanimously agreed that this is a chain of command issue not an EAC issue.

- c. **Training for Resource Specialist and Office Associates:** Issue recommended that special training be provided to new Resource Specialist and Office Associates; especially those that perform both functions. Stacy Overby stated that this idea is being worked at the Executive level currently but date has not been set. Quick resolution was to ensure that Regional Office Associates are assisting those requiring training or coordinate to have person requiring training to go to College Station and receive one on one training with personnel in specific subject areas. Stacy will identify what is long term training plan.

- d. **Office Battery Recycle Need:** Issue is that offices need to develop a battery recycle program that is supported by TFS leadership. Various alternatives were discussed. Alternatives included programs that cost and those programs that are free through various city and county programs. Sam Lewis will send out alternative listing that explains how to locate free sources in the local area.

- e. **Flexible Work Schedule:** Issue was raised requesting that TFS personnel be allowed to develop flexible work schedules as long as they still meet their 40 hours within a work week. A&M System policy 33.06.01, par. 4-6 states the following:
 - 4. FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULES
A flexible work schedule permits an employee to work a predetermined and approved variation of the employee's standard work schedule. The minimum timeframe for a flexible schedule is two months. A nonexempt employee must maintain a 40-hour workweek. An employee who is exempt under the FLSA must maintain either a 40-hour workweek or an 80-hour schedule over two consecutive workweeks. A flexible schedule does not limit the hours that an exempt employee must work to complete the job requirements.
 - 5. TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENT OF WORK SCHEDULES

An employee may adjust hours within a workday or workweek as long as a 40-hour workweek is maintained. This schedule adjustment requires the appropriate supervisor's approval, is for a justifiable reason and does not represent a flexible work schedule as defined in Section 4 above.

6. OTHER

The component may offer an employee other flexible work arrangements that benefit the employee and the component. The component also may require an employee to work a flexible schedule when required by the job duties. This includes requiring shift work, work on weekends and other schedules required by the job duties and responsibilities.

f. **Leave w/pay to assist with fires with VFD:** Issue requested that TFS members be allowed to use their 40 hours per year for training and apply it toward the time when they assist their VFD on a fire call. Philip Gates explained that new guidance allows but revised policy is still being written. Stacy stated that he would verify if policy is being revised.

4. **Personnel Meeting Date:** Tentative date of November 10, 2009 for the upcoming personnel meeting was published.

5. **Next Meeting Date:** August 20, 2009, 10:00am, College Station

6. **Future Meeting Dates:** October, 29, 2009, 10:00am, College Station

James Polasek adjourned the Council meeting at approximately 11:35am.