

# **GREENE COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

## **2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

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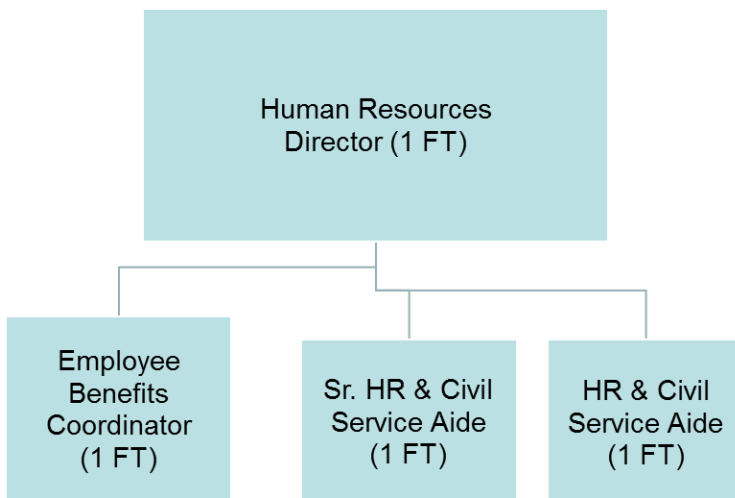
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**HR MISSION STATEMENT:** To provide the highest quality personnel services to our employees, retirees and other customers, while promoting effective and efficient County government.

**HR VISION:** To support the work of the Greene County community toward achievement of its strategic goals.

**HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**



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**INTRODUCTION**

The Greene County Human Resources Department is one of the foundations of Greene County Government and, as such, continued to play an important role toward accomplishing the mission and goals of the organization in 2019. We strive for excellence on a daily basis in providing employment-related resources and addressing the information needs of staff, as well as in serving our retirees, prospective employees, and other customers.

Union contract negotiations was a major focus for HR in 2019 as six of the County’s collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) would be lapsing on December 31<sup>st</sup>, and there was an eagerness to resolve the seventh which had run out years ago. Preparations began early in the year with the HR Director’s active involvement in developing the County’s proposals and compiling employee data sheets for each union for purposes of costing out the proposals of both sides. By late summer, seven diverse management and labor teams were working earnestly to settle their respective agreements by the end of the year. **Spoiler Alert:** Any CBAs not settled by December 31<sup>st</sup> were resolved in the first quarter of 2020. In many respects, it was an extremely productive period of negotiations for all concerned.

Aside from contract negotiations, HR continued to carry out other important work in the areas of **staffing and employment, compensation and benefits, labor and employee relations, and training and staff development.** Our team, which is responsible for providing HR services to nearly 550 active employees and 350 retirees, was able to accomplish all of its stated goals for 2019, including:

1. Continuing to monitor legislated changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act Overtime Exemption and making sure employees are properly classified;

2. Administering the sexual harassment prevention training program for all members of the workforce and ensuring compliance with NYS Law;
3. Establishing a process to identify and prepare I-9's for destruction, as appropriate;
4. Helping facilitate the transition from a fully insured to a self-insured health plan, in addition to a carrier change;
5. Tracking the "Covered Individuals" details for ACA 1095 reporting purposes in conjunction with the County's new self-insured status; continuing to update our database as employment and health care coverage changes occur; and monitoring activity at the federal level in terms of replacement plans, and the like; and
6. Staying abreast of any new or changing workplace rules and regulations and responding accordingly.

A new staff member was assimilated into the department in February to assist with an ever growing workload and was helpful to the team in accomplishing some of the above goals.

All HR staff participated in in-person and Web based professional development and training. Topics ranged from legal (FLSA, FMLA, I-9 and E-Verify, among others), NYS Retirement System updates, employee benefits, turnover and retention, and employee engagement. Representatives also attended their annual Labor, Employment & HR conference and Workers' Compensation conference.

Human Resources staff have the unique opportunity to touch the lives of all employees throughout their County careers. We enjoy what we do, are proud of our many achievements, and are pleased to present this summary of activities for 2019.

## STAFFING AND EMPLOYMENT

### Personnel Changes

HR remained busy managing staffing, including hiring and processing retirements, promotions, transfers, and many employee status changes.

	New Hires	Rehired Retiree	Resigned	Retired	Terminated	Deceased	Total
2017	61	4	30	19	10	2	126
2018	63	2	30	13	17	1	126
2019	66	12	41	17	9	0	145

HR also worked closely with department heads and Civil Service to post, advertise, and fill vacancies in accordance with NYS Civil Service Law, Greene County Civil Service Rules and Regulations, and applicable provisions of the union contracts and County policies and procedures. In terms of filling vacancies, we are required to post within an agency or on a County-wide basis first, or to refer to an existing eligibles list generated by Civil Service examination. Job announcements are sent to the departments for posting in accordance with Civil Service Rules and applicable union contract language, and placed on the Greene County website. When, and if, the search for candidates requires external advertising, we utilize as many free or low-cost alternatives as possible, before consulting with a department head about more pricey options. The number of vacancies posted internally and the number of Civil Service exam lists canvassed, typically exceeds the number of advertised positions. Hiring from an exam list is usually preferable to hiring a candidate provisionally since there is a risk the incumbent may not pass the test or be "reachable" on the list. This outcome can be devastating to the employee, and a waste of time and money for the employer. Very often, the hiring authority waits until the exam results are out before filling the vacancy.

### **Reclassifications, Reallocations, Promotional Opportunities**

In 2019, HR participated in evaluating the reclassification request of just one department head for one individual which was recommended for approval by the Reclassification/Reallocation Committee. The Committee is comprised of the Commissioner of Civil Service, HR Director and a department head appointed by the County Administrator annually on a rotating basis.

The HR Director also collaborated with department heads, the County Administrator and Civil Service on staffing planning. These efforts led to the creation of several new titles, some of which provided promotional opportunities for a number of staff. The HR Director evaluated all newly created bargaining unit titles and assigned pay grades accordingly. Promotion exams for some existing titles were ordered by a couple of department heads based upon the needs of those departments. Other exams were ordered by Civil Service at the request of department heads filling vacancies.

### **Employment Outreach**

HR continued to partner with Greene County Civil Service to expand its outreach to local high school students regarding employment with Greene County, and to explain the job application and examination processes. Early in the year, we developed a poster and flier which was sent to all school guidance offices for display and dissemination. One member from each department also participated in the annual "Adult Skills Day" at Coxsackie-Athens High School for which they received very positive feedback. We look forward to further developing our efforts and school/student interest going forward.

### **Pre-employment Screenings**

Background checks, physicals and drug screens continued to be ordered on all prospective new hires receiving a conditional offer of employment. All background checks ordered by the HR Department are conducted by the Greene County Sheriff's Office.

### **Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9)**

**In accordance with our stated goals for 2019**, HR established a procedure to identify and prepare old I-9 forms for destruction, as appropriate. I-9 forms document verification of the identity and employment authorization of each new hire to work in the United States and are mandated to be completed during the onboarding process. Removing old forms, when it is allowable, helps limit an organization's exposure to lawsuits and claims of misconduct.

HR adhered to the following criteria in carrying out this project:

- I-9s of all current employees would be retained;
- I-9s of all former employees would be retained until 3 years following their date of hire or 1 year following end of employment, whichever comes later.

By following our established process the HR Department was able to accomplish its desired outcomes:

- Removed I-9s of former employees that had exceeded the above retention schedule;
- Logged the employee information of I-9s to be destroyed in the HR SharePoint, including full name, last 4-digits of SSN, date of hire, date of termination, I-9 year, date sent to Records Management and notes (i.e., name changes);
- Box sent to Records Management for destruction.

In addition, HR kept on the lookout for possible changes to employment verification laws promulgated by the federal government.

### **Random Drug Screens**

A random drug screening program initiated for employees in the Managerial/Confidential (M/C) group in 2017, was expanded to members of the CSEA General and CSEA Dispatch/Probation Units in 2018. As a result of Contract talks in 2019 the UPSEU random drug screen program, which had only applied to

nurses at the Jail, would be expanded to all members of the bargaining unit effective 1/1/2020. Employees of the County's Highway and Solid Waste Management Department, and the Sheriff's Office/Jail, participate in separate, agency-specific random drug screen programs.

### **License Event Notification Service (LENS)**

HR continued to administer the LENS Program through the NYS DMV. LENS is a data service that gathers information daily from the DMV's driver's license files and reports any new information to us (e.g., suspensions, expirations, renewals, etc.). As a result, we are able to monitor the NYS license records of CDL holders and other employees that drive for the County in the course of their work. This service is free to government agencies and helps reduce the County's insurance rates.

### **Employee Performance Appraisals**

HR continued to send out quarterly reminders and to monitor the completion of employee performance appraisals by department managers and supervisors.

### **Exit interviews**

HR continued to provide employees the opportunity to complete a survey upon retirement or voluntary separation from employment. Despite revamping the Exit Interview Questionnaire in 2018 as a strategy for eliciting greater participation, there was no increase in the response rate in 2019. Feedback was also very individualized which limited our ability to recommend any changes on a macro level. While the importance of providing feedback about one's experience working for the County continued to be emphasized, it is clear there needs to be a new approach for gathering information about what the County is doing right as an employer and what it can improve upon.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO-4) Reporting**

In accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) requires biennial reports in odd-numbered years from public employers which indicate the composition of their workforce by sex and by race/ethnic category. The reporting agencies provide information on their employment totals, and employee job category and salary by sex and race/ethnic group, as of June 30<sup>th</sup> of the survey year. **In 2019, HR generated the data necessary to complete the EEO-4 survey instrument on-line, then submitted it to the federal government electronically well in advance of the September 30th deadline.**

### **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

The HR Department's COOP was reviewed and updated in March as a way of ensuring its Mission Essential Functions would be able to be performed proficiently, and with minimal disruption, in the event our Primary Operating Location is unable to be used during an emergency.

### **Miscellaneous Policies and Forms**

In 2019, HR staff developed and/or amended the following policies and forms not aforementioned in this report:

1. Updated the compliance posting re: the NYS Voting Leave Law in accordance with changes promulgated by the State;
2. Revamped the HR document "Guidelines for Pre-Employment Inquiries and Selection" to add information about the "Do's and Don'ts" concerning salary history; and
3. Reviewed and revised the **employment application** in response to issues being raised nationally (i.e., added a line for "preferred name").

### **Cost Allocation Plan and Annual Audit**

HR compiled employment data needed by the consultant preparing the County's Annual Cost Allocation Plan. Also responded to requests for information from the County's auditors during their annual review, as well as from the NYS Comptroller's Office.

### **NYSAC Salary Survey**

HR completed the annual salary survey administered by the NYS Association of Counties.

### **Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) Requests**

HR collected data for the County Attorney in response to a number of Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests received during the year

## **COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS**

### **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**

#### **HR laid out a number of goals related to the ACA for 2019, all of which were accomplished.**

January 1, 2019 marked the beginning of a major health insurance plan change for the County as its primary plans went from being fully insured to self-insured. The result of the switch from an ACA reporting standpoint was that HR had to begin tracking the "Covered Individuals" details (which had formerly been done by the insurance carrier) in addition to the "Offer and Coverage" information (which it had always been doing) for 1095 reporting. This entailed review and entry of *all covered employee and dependent information* into the personnel/payroll system for individuals subject to the reporting requirements. Also, to continue updating the records of all staff in the County's database as employment status and/or health insurance coverage changes occurred throughout the year. (This is something we have always had as a primary goal.)

Another goal achieved was to closely monitor activity at the federal level re: possible amendments or repeal, replacement, and/or repair plans. Beyond that, HR persisted in managing the myriad of tasks needed to successfully achieve compliance with the ACA's many mandates, including: (1) Monitoring the hours worked of all on-going part-time and per diem employees during the County's "Standard Measurement Period" in order to evaluate their eligibility for health insurance, (2) Monitoring the hours worked of all newly hired variable hour part-time and per diem employees during their "Initial Measurement Period" in order to evaluate their eligibility for health insurance, (3) Conducting "Affordability" calculations for each of the health plans offered by the County, and (4) Regularly re-evaluating the "Offer and Coverage" and "Safe Harbor" codes being used to ensure our selections are appropriate for each individual's circumstances, in order that our end product will be as precise as possible.

### **Health Insurance**

**Another 2019 goal successfully achieved by HR staff was to help transition the County from a fully insured (minimum premium) health care plan to a self-insured (administrative services only) arrangement, and to facilitate a change in health insurance carriers.** The self-insured PPO and EPO plans were structured the same as the existing ones, with the only real difference being the way in which the claims would be paid. The County Administrator initiated the transfer as a way of containing costs, although employee premium contributions also ended up being slightly less in 2019 over the previous year. All changes took effect on January 1, 2019.

Most of the prep work was able to be accomplished at the tail end of 2018 in terms of communicating the shift to plan members, processing Open Enrollment changes, and updating the personnel/payroll system, although some of those tasks dribbled into the start of the new plan year. Early on, there was an ID card

glitch on the vendor side that had to be dealt with, otherwise, HR staff continued to address employee questions, concerns and coverage issues as they normally would, and worked diligently to make the transition as seamless as possible. We also followed-up on any new program or vendor changes announced by the carrier during the course of the year (i.e., mail order Rx). The most impactful change for HR staff resulting from the move to a self-insured plan related to how it would affect our on-going responsibilities regarding Affordable Care Act (ACA) reporting. (See the ACA section of this report above.)

HR continued to administer the following health insurance plans in 2019 for **approximately 1400 Greene County employees, retirees and dependents:**

- 1) Medicare Advantage Plan
- 2) Non-deductible PPO and EPO
- 3) Deductible PPO and EPO

Note: The Teamsters Health and Hospital Fund Select Plan is managed by the Greene County Department of Highway and Solid Waste for Teamsters bargaining unit members.

At year's end, HR focused on completing transfer of AFSCME members to enrollment in the deductible plans effective 1/1/2020. This included entering updates in the personnel/payroll system related to enrollment and ACA Offer and Coverage details, as well as ramping-up our outreach to help participants better understand how the deductible plans work, and to address their questions and concerns.

### **Medicare Advantage Plan (MAP)**

There were no plan or carrier changes re: the MAP in 2019. HR continued to monitor when benefit eligible retirees and their benefit eligible dependents become qualified for Medicare Part B in order to appropriately transfer them to the County's Medicare Advantage Plan.

### **Creditable Coverage Notices**

HR sent annual compliance notices to all Medicare eligible actively working individuals and their dependents, Medicare eligible COBRA individuals and their dependents, Medicare eligible disabled individuals and their dependents, and retirees and dependents covered by the Greene County Prescription Drug Plan, informing them that the Greene County plan is a creditable plan so they need not join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. The HR Department also fulfilled the online Notice of Disclosure to CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) requirement.

### **Health Insurance Buyout**

HR continued to process applications and maintain records for the Health Insurance Buyout for employees providing proof of alternative health care coverage. A buyout cap mirroring the cap negotiated for both CSEA Units effective 1/1/18, became operational for management and confidential staff, and elected officials on 1/1/19. Rather than being tied to health insurance premiums which continually rise, the caps are fixed dollar amounts. One of the County Administrator's goals for 2019 was to negotiate a buyout cap for the remaining bargaining units effective for 2020. We were successful in doing that for Corrections, Deputies, and UPSEU, and it will likely be on the table for future negotiations with AFSCME. The Teamsters do not have a buyout option. Participation in the buyout hovers around 120 employees at any given time.

### **Dental and Vision Insurance**

No modifications in dental or vision insurance carriers or plan designs were made for plan year 2019. Dental rates negotiated for 2018 were for a 2-year period. The vision rates have remained steady since 2016. HR staff continued with routine administration of the plans throughout the year.



### **Open Enrollment**

HR coordinated an Employee Benefits Fair during the annual Open Enrollment Period providing employees the opportunity to converse with representatives from the County's benefits providers (e.g., health, dental, vision, and supplemental). HR also processed all enrollment changes made during Open Enrollment for a January 1st start date.

### **Life Insurance**

HR also continued to oversee the life insurance plan for members of the Management/Confidential (M/C) group, including generating COBRA notices for those terminating employment.

### **Flexible Spending Plan (FSA)**

HR kept administering the FSA in 2019. **Enrollment in the plan increased by more than 10% for the year, then decreased by about 5% during the fall Open Enrollment period for the 2020 plan year.** Enrollees enjoyed an approved increase in the 2019 annual medical FSA designation to \$2650 from \$2600. The County Administrator upped the limit again at Open Enrollment time to \$2700 for the coming year, in addition to reconfirming his decision not to participate in the rollover.

### **COBRA Administration**

HR routinely extends health, dental and vision insurance coverage under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) to covered employees and their family members when there is a "qualifying event" that would result in a loss of coverage under an employer's plan (e.g., resignation, loss of dependent care status, divorce, death, etc.). The COBRA amount is equal to the full cost of the monthly insurance premiums. HR also created and is using separate and distinct COBRA notices for the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and Life Insurance Plan.

### **Premium Assistance Program**

HR updated and posted a mandated notice on the employee portal, and sent the same to all departments for posting, regarding potential employee eligibility for a program available through New York State that can help those struggling to pay their insurance premiums. NYS uses funds from its Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP) to help people who are eligible for employer-sponsored health coverage, but need assistance in covering the cost of their health premiums. This premium assistance program became effective for local government employees on September 1, 2010.

### **NYS Statutory Disability Insurance**

HR reviewed a number of quotes collected by our broker re: administration of the County's short-term disability insurance program for staff. We were fortunate to find a new carrier that would provide the County with all the services it was seeking (i.e., would generate and disseminate disability related W-2's) and at a lower premium.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

As co-ADA Coordinators, the HR Director and County Attorney processed eight (8) requests for accommodation in 2019, which was **an increase of 50% over the previous year.**

### **Employee Assistance Program**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) celebrated its third year of operation in 2019. The EAP is a free, confidential service available to Greene County employees and their immediate family members that provides a way to cope with issues such as stress, grief, anxiety, family/marital concerns, substance abuse and work-related issues. A report of aggregate data received for the 2019 plan year revealed **utilization declined in 2019 as compared to years 1 and 2 of the program.** This happened despite the EAP maintaining a presence at the annual Benefits Fair, distribution of informational material during the onboarding process, more frequent email blasts and other communications.

2017	2018	2019
3.1%	3.0%	2.1%

Note: 3% is slightly above the national average.

Since it is desirable to have employees maximizing use of this valuable resource for their own well-being, as well as to help reduce time and attendance issues, maintain performance, and minimize work-related injury/illness and health care costs, promotional efforts will be on-going.

**Medical Leave, Disability, Paid Family Leave**

HR processed a total of 64 new requests for leave under the **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** in 2019, which was an **increase of 5%** from the previous year. A total of 54 applications were approved for FMLA leave. The others were disqualified because the applicants did not meet the eligibility requirements (i.e., had not worked for the County a minimum of 12 months and/or had not worked at least 1250 hours in the previous 12 months). However, all 10 of these applicants were approved for non-FMLA medical leaves by the County Administrator. The majority of employees used FMLA leave for their own serious health condition. The length of the leaves averaged 2 – 4 weeks for most individuals, although six of the participants were out for 12 weeks or more. Twenty-four of the 54 leaves were granted on an intermittent basis representing an **increase of 33% over the prior year**. HR processed the paperwork for 16 employees on approved medical leave who also filed for **NYS Statutory Disability**. This was **more than double the number in 2018**. One of the reasons employees may decline short-term disability is that it can negatively impact the accumulation of retirement service credit. There were **no new requests for FMLA Military Family Leave** in 2019.

The County opted not to participate in the **New York Paid Family Leave** program which became effective in 2018. The program is optional for public employers in New York State. There is currently no collective bargaining obligation to provide the Paid Family Leave benefit to Greene County employees, however, leave benefits are extended to them under the FMLA and the union contracts covering County employees.

**Workers' Compensation**

HR continued to guide claimants and department representatives through the Workers' Compensation claims process, transmit paperwork to the County's Third-Party Administrator (TPA), and follow-up as needed. In January 2019, HR completed the SH900 and SH900.1 forms for 2018, distributed them to County departments in compliance with posting mandates, and sent copies to the NYS Department of Labor. HR also maintained records of all existing and new work-related injuries and illnesses that occurred throughout the 2019 calendar year. In 2019, Greene County had the following experience:

- **0 deaths (no change from 2018)**
- **4 cases of missed work (down 43% from 2018)**
- **0 job transfer or restriction cases (no change from 2018)**
- **8 other reportable cases (down 62% from 2018)**

This was the result of **12 total incidents** which represents a **57% decrease** as compared to 2018.

**FLSA Overtime Rule Exemption**

Pursuant to an on-going and renewed **HR Department goal for 2019**, the HR Director continued to monitor activity at the federal level related to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Overtime Rule Exemption, in order to make sure employees are properly classified.

The FLSA entitles employees to overtime payments, in certain circumstances, unless they are subject to an FLSA exemption. An attempt to update the Exempt Overtime Rule at the federal level has persisted for some time. The U.S. Department of Labor's 2016 changes were met with legal challenges, causing the agency to file an appeal and a motion to stay while it began work on an amended proposal. While the item continued to appear on the 2018 regulatory agenda, with regional and various other thresholds under deliberation, no changes to the salary-level threshold were announced by the close of that year. Ultimately, the Department of Labor issued a final rule on September 24, 2019 increasing the salary level threshold for white-collar exemptions **from \$23,660 (in existence since 2004) to \$38,566 annually**. The change would be **effective on January 1, 2020**. Greene County HR analyzed all its existing managerial salaries and studied the job duties of every individual to verify each was primarily involved in professional, administrative or executive duties as detailed in the regulations, and that they were appropriately classified as exempt.

### **Unemployment Claims**

HR assisted in processing all claims for unemployment insurance benefits in 2019.

### **Retirement: New York State Voluntary Defined Contribution Program**

The HR Department continued to offer this alternative to membership in the NYS and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) to all eligible new hires. (General eligibility: Non-union employees hired on or after 7/1/13 that make \$75,000 or more and are not already enrolled in the NYSLRS.) Defined contribution plans are retirement savings vehicles that provide benefits "defined" by employer and employee contributions to the plan and the investment earnings on those contributions. Participants are responsible for managing the investments in their account. Their retirement benefits are based on the success of their investments. This is different from the NYSLRS which is a defined benefit plan that provides a fixed and predictable lifetime monthly income at retirement.

### **Compliance Postings**

HR conducted its annual audit of federal and state employment posting mandates and distributed new and updated postings to all departments at that time and as required throughout the year.

### **Employee Wellness**

Working in tandem with the County's new insurance carrier, the HR Department remained an active participant on the Wellness Committee, along with representatives from Greene County Public Health, the Greene County Healthy Weight initiative, the County Administrator, and the County's insurance broker. The **Go Greene for Wellness Team** continued to offer or support a variety of valuable wellness programs over the course of the year, including the *Vitality Greene Activity Challenge* which enabled participants to track "steps" online and be eligible for prizes along the way. In addition, monthly wellness tips continued, complimentary wellness screenings were piloted, assistance enrolling in the telemedicine program was offered, and travel size first aid kits were dispersed. At year's end, the Committee was preparing to launch the *Be Well* physicals incentive program based on an idea the County Administrator had been promoting for some time. The incentive program was planned to be piloted in 2020 for all active employees enrolled in the County's primary health insurance plans.

### **Blood Borne Pathogens**

HR continued to have a presence on the Blood Borne Pathogens Committee and worked with the Public Health Department to coordinate and track training for County employees for 2019.

## **LABOR AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

### **Union Contract Negotiations**

The HR Director maintains an active role on the management teams for union contract negotiations, including assisting with development of the County's proposals, as well as analyzing the proposals of each union. She is also responsible for preparation of the employee data sheets for each bargaining unit, including hire and longevity dates, leave time accrued and taken, overtime earned, health insurance enrollment information, and so on. Upon ratification of each contract, the HR Director assists in checking the final document for accuracy, works with the Payroll Department to establish the pay schedules, and implements new or amended terms of each Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), as required.

In 2019, the negotiations calendar grew hectic by mid-year. Not only were AFSCME members still without a contract after many years, the other six union contracts were due to expire on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Starting with the Teamsters in mid-August, seven diverse management and labor teams worked earnestly to come to a meeting of the minds on their respective agreements in hopes of getting as many settled as possible before the end of the year.

**AFSCME**: As 2018 came to a close, there was still no negotiated agreement between the County and its Highway workers for the term beginning January 1, 2015. The history of these protracted negotiations is well documented in prior HR annual reports. In a nutshell, despite all attempts to settle the contract through mediation, team member changes, information sessions, breaks and other efforts, multiple contracts were voted down over the years with the primary rub seeming to be a request that the membership move to the County's deductible health insurance plan. By October 2018, the parties had been back at mediation and were awaiting fact finding which began in March 2019. Thereafter, an MOA was signed by the parties, but a vote was not taken which resulted in the County filing an improper practice charge against the Union. Fortunately, in advance of the fact finding, the parties were able to discuss and resolve a few outstanding issues resulting in a "yes" vote by the membership and full ratification in December for the term January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2023. Among the contract provisions was the health insurance plan change the County had been seeking, along with a 2019 signing bonus (not on base) and, in 2020, a new step plus longevity increases, and 2.25% wage increases for years 2020 - 2023.

**Corrections Unit (Council 82)** and **CSEA Dispatch and Probation Unit 7002**: The respective negotiating teams for each of these bargaining units began meeting in October 2019. By the end of the year, the terms of both agreements were close to resolution and both teams were awaiting their next negotiations sessions scheduled for January 2020.

**CSEA General Unit 7000**: The parties exchanged proposals in October and continued to negotiate through the end of December, and into the following year.

**Deputy Sheriff's (Council 82)**: The parties held their first negotiations session in September and, by November, had entered into an agreement which was fully ratified by the parties in early January. The 3-year deal included a complete restructuring of the salary schedule, an increase in the weekend on-call stipend, implementation of a cap on the health insurance buyout, and elimination of the buyout in situations where a parent and child (under 26) are both employed by the County.

**Teamsters (Solid Waste Management)**: The parties convened in August, had the contract settled in two meetings, and fully ratified by mid-October. The contract provided a \$750 base increase plus 2.25% for 2020, in addition to 2.25% pay increases each year for 2021, 2022, and 2023.

**UPSEU (Nurses)**: Negotiations were up and running by October and the respective team members were able to reach an agreement by mid-December. The 2020 - 2022 contract, which would

be fully ratified on January 13, 2021, provided for lump sum increases added to base pay plus 2.5% wage adjustments in both 2020 and 2021, plus a 2.5% wage adjustment for 2022. In addition, the membership agreed to random drug screening for all covered employees, the same health insurance buyout changes as were negotiated with the Deputies, as well as language changes re: travel time and tardiness, among other things.

### **Contract Grievances**

The HR Director was present at most of the Step 2 grievance meetings at the request of the County Administrator. A total of 10 on-going or new grievances were processed in 2019 with the following outcomes. **This represents a 9% drop in actions since 2018 when there was a 50% decline over the prior year.**

- Denied at Step 2 - 2
- Denied by Arbitrator – 1
- Upheld at Step 2. Change in process going forward. – 2
- Denied at Step 2. Addressing via Labor-Management meetings. – 1
- Adjourned by Union - 1
- Withdrawn by Union – 2
  
- Improper Practice – Withdrawn by Union. Policy negotiated. - 1

### **Labor-Management Meetings**

The HR Director participated with the County Administrator and several department heads in labor-management meetings to discuss a number of department-specific policy development issues and grievance-related matters.

### **Management Team Support**

The HR Director continued to be regularly engaged with department heads and supervisors in a consultation and support role regarding staffing and employee relations matters.

### **Disciplinary Actions**

The HR Director assisted department heads in processing **18** new or continuing disciplinary actions in 2019 which had the following results. **This represents a 12.5% increase in disciplines above 2018 when there was a 24% decrease over the previous year.**

- Letter of Reprimand - 1
- NOD withdrawn by County. Policy negotiated - 1
- Loss of 10 yet-to-be earned vacation days - 1
- 20 days unpaid suspension - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - Letter of Reprimand - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - Letter of Reprimand and loss of 12 hours vacation – 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - 5 days unpaid suspension (2 held in abeyance) and mandatory EAP - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - 11 days unpaid suspension - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - 3 week unpaid suspension - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - Loss of all current vacation accruals and 9 days unpaid suspension - 1
- Stipulation of Settlement - Letter of Reprimand and 3 days unpaid suspension (2 held in abeyance) -1
- Stipulation of Settlement - 6 days unpaid suspension (4 held in abeyance) – 2
- Stipulation of Settlement - 90 day demotion – 1
- Resignation in lieu of termination, plus monetary settlement – 2
- Termination - 2

### **Workplace Investigations, Administrative Proceedings and Hearings**

Aside from the disciplinary matters, the HR Director participated in a number of other workplace investigations, administrative proceedings, and hearings.

### **Employee Awards**

HR produced the annual employee awards event on behalf of the Legislature in collaboration with the County Administrator's office. Pins and certificates were conferred within the departments and a ceremony was held prior to a Legislature meeting to announce the Employee of the Year and Chairman's Award Winner.

## **STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

HR coordinated the following classes in 2019, and continued to administer a database to track employee participation in County-sponsored compliance (i.e., workplace violence prevention) and other training:

### **Sexual Harassment Prevention**

As per one of HR's **primary goals for 2019**, the HR department was able to successfully facilitate compliance with the annual sexual harassment prevention training and related mandates as set forth in the 2018 New York State Budget.

HR had previously updated the County's sexual harassment and discriminatory harassment prevention policies and disseminated them to staff, posted them on compliance boards at all worksites and on the Employee Information Website, HR Department website, and the County SharePoint. The policies were also integrated into the new hire packets. We had amended and began using new policy acknowledgment forms for employees, interns, and volunteers. The only thing left to do was to get the training done which is what we did.

Training sessions conducted by the County's labor counsel were held on a regular basis throughout the year for all staff. The plan for 2020 is to provide as much of the training as possible in an online format and to continue with in-person training only for those staff that don't have access to a computer at work. HR staff researched a number of options throughout the fall and identified a known resource with whom the County already had an affiliation that would offer us access to its entire database of on-line classes and related tools at no cost. Sexual harassment prevention training will be on-going on an annual basis in accordance with the Law.

*NOTE: NYS Human Rights Law also protects those providing services in the workplace from sexual harassment. Therefore, the policies and an acknowledgement form were also made available by the County Attorney's Office to contractors, subcontractors, vendors, consultants or others providing services to Greene County. These documents can be found in the Legal Notices section of the Greene County website.*

**Blood Borne Pathogens:** In collaboration with Greene County Public Health, provided training for employees that may be at risk of accidental occupational exposure to blood borne pathogens or other potentially infectious materials in the course of their work.

**Candidate Interview Training:** A skills building workshop designed to support hiring managers in conducting legal & well-organized interviews, gaining insights into an applicant's future job performance and supporting the best candidates once they are hired. As in the past, Workforce Development Grant funds were used to cover the cost of the training offered through Columbia-Greene Community College.

**Leadership Skills: Peer to Supervisor:** Assisted the County Administrator in rolling out this course designed to facilitate the transition of staff moving into a supervisory role.

### **PLANS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE**

In addition to continually improving our service to Greene County's employees, retirees and members of the public who seek our assistance, the Human Resources Department has set the following goals for 2020:

1. **COVID-19 Response:** Become educated about and stay on top of the myriad of rules and regulations implemented at the state and federal level that may impact our organization and its employees; in particular, paid leave laws. Be able to appropriately administer paid leave. Also, do whatever we can in our role as HR professionals in assist staff during the pandemic.
2. **Sexual Harassment Prevention:** Continue training for all employees in accordance with NYS law and train as many staff as possible in an on-line format.
3. **Affordable Care Act:** Continue monitoring what's happening at the federal level re: replacement plans, etc.
4. **EAP:** Reignite our promotional efforts in order to increase utilization of this valuable resource for employee well-being.
5. **Exit Interview:** To think creatively about different approaches to increasing participation.
6. **Leadership Change:** Prepare for the successful transition of a new Human Resources Director into this key leadership position upon the incumbent's retirement in September,