

FEDERAL PREVAILING RATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

614th FPRAC

SHELDON FRIEDMAN, Chairperson, Presiding

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Room 5526
Office of Personnel Management
Washington, D.C. 20415**ATTENDANCE:****Members/Alternates:**Management Members:Mark Allen, OPM
Jim Davey, DoD
Gary Buck, Army
Stephanie Boyd, VA (via phone)Labor Members:Randy Erwin, NFFE/MTD
Jacque Simon, AFGE (via phone)
Candace Archer, AFGE (via phone)
Robert Shore, NAGE
Steven Landis, ACT**Staff Specialists and Visitors:**Brenda Roberts, Designated Federal Officer, OPM
Madeline Gonzalez, OPM
Tim Curry, OPM
Jim Brady, DoD
Julie Blanks, DoD
David Pedersen, Navy
Rosemary Meriwether, Navy
Arleen Romba, VA (via phone)
Lamar Elliott, ACT
Brittany Holder, NAGE (via phone)
Sarah Suszczyk, NAGE (via phone)
Robert Clearwater, Local NAGE President (via phone)
Patrick Singer, Grounds Work Leader (via phone)
Victor Zimmerman, Wage Grade Maintenance Mechanic (via phone)**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
– FPRAC Membership Roster for FY 2016, 614-OC-1	
– Proposed rule for Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, 614-OPM-3	
II. Review of the Minutes of the 613th Meeting.....	7
III. Old Business.....	7
a. 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	
– Review of Shawnee County, Kansas, 612-MGT-1	
b. Definition of Lane County, Oregon, to a Nonappropriated Fund Federal Wage System Wage Area, 613-MGT-2	
IV. New Business.....	7
a. Additional information on Shawnee County, Kansas, 614-OPM-1	
b. Phone participation from by the following Topeka VA Medical Center FWS employees:	
– Mr. Victor Zimmerman, WG Maintenance Mechanic	
– Mr. William Loder, Supervisor in Electrical and Maintenance	
– Mr. Patrick Singer, Grounds Work Leader	
– Mr. Robert Clearwater, Local NAGE President	
c. HVAC Coverage in Kansas City Wage Area by Topeka WG Employees, 614-NAGE-1	
d. Log of Trips from Topeka to Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Kansas City Wage Area, 614-NAGE-2	
e. Email Stating Topeka Staff Provides Shuttles to Kansas City Wage Area, 614-NAGE-3	
f. Email Regarding Topeka WG Grounds Staff Vehicle Assistance, 614-NAGE-4	
g. Email Regarding Topeka WG Maintenance Employees Performing Work at Community Based Outpatient Clinics East of Shawnee County, 614-NAGE-5	
h. Motor Vehicle Log Showing Trips from Topeka to Kansas City Wage Area and Leavenworth, 614-NAGE-6	
i. Work Orders for Topeka WG Employees to Perform Work at Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Kansas City Wage Area, 614-NAGE-7	
j. Additional information on Lane County, Oregon, 614-OPM-2	
k. Definition of Forsyth and Mecklenburg Counties, North Carolina, to a Nonappropriated Fund Federal Wage System Wage Area, 614-MGT-1	
l. Definition of Pitt County, North Carolina, to a Nonappropriated Fund Federal Wage System Wage Area, 614-MGT-2	
m. Definition of Fulton County, Georgia, to a Nonappropriated Fund Federal Wage System Wage Area, 614-MGT-3	

P R O C E E D I N G

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this, our 614th meeting of the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee. We have got a crowded agenda, so let's get started. My name is Sheldon Friedman, Chair of the Committee. And as we usually do, let's go around the table and have the Committee members introduce themselves, and after that, I'll ask the Committee members on the phone to introduce themselves. Mark, why don't we start with you today?

MR. ALLEN: Mark Allen with OPM.

MR. DAVEY: Jim Davey with DoD.

MR. BUCK: Gary Buck, Department of Army.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Stephanie, are you on the phone?

MS. BOYD: [via phone] Yes. Stephanie Boyd with VA.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

MR. ERWIN: Randy Erwin with NFEE, representing Metal Trades Department.

MR. SHORE: Robert Shore with NAGE.

MR. LANDIS: Steve Landis with ACT.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Jacque, would you introduce yourself, please?

MS. SIMON: [via phone] Jacque Simon, AFGE.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: And is Candace there now? Not yet?

MS. SIMON: [via phone] She's on travel, and I guess she must not have been able to call in. I don't know.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. And now let's also have other people in the room introduce themselves. Brenda, please start. Thank you.

MS. ROBERTS: Brenda Roberts, OPM Designated Federal Officer.

MS. MERIWETHER: Rosemary Meriwether, Navy.

MR. PEDERSEN: David Pedersen, Navy.

MS. BLANKS: Julie Blanks, DoD.

MR. BRADY: Jim Brady, DoD.

MR. EICHER: Mike Eicher, OPM.

MS. GONZALEZ: Madeline Gonzalez with OPM.

MS. PAUNOIU: Ana Paunoiu, OPM.

MR. ELLIOTT: Lamar Elliott, ACT.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Thank you.

And I know we have several guests on the phone, so please introduce yourselves now.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Victor Zimmerman with the VA in Kansas, NAGE.

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Singer with the VA,

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: And, Arlene, are you there?

MS. ROMBA: [via phone] Yes. Good morning. This is Arlene Romba with VA.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Thank you, and good morning again.

A couple of quick announcements. I've circulated the membership roster for our Committee, which we haven't circulated in a while. You should have that in your packets. I think everybody—did somebody just join us?

MS. ARCHER: [via phone] Yes. My apologies for being late. I was having trouble calling in. This is Candace Archer, AFGE.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Good morning, Candace.

MS. ARCHER: [via phone] Good morning.

MS. SUSZCZYK: [via phone] Chairman Friedman, this is Sarah Suszczyk and Brittany Holder from NAGE.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. Thank you. Thank you.

MS. HOLDER: [via phone] Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: All right. One other announcement, I think people know this already, but we put in your packets the proposed rule relating to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. A notice about that was published in yesterday's Federal Register. The 30-day comment period ends on August 19th. I thought people would want to know that, and also, I think this will enable us to revive our working group discussion of the whole issue of whether we need to have some sort of FPRAC recommendation about rules relating to closely located, closely related federal activities that straddle wage area boundaries. That's a discussion we've had on hold for a long time. If people agree, then I would hope we could have a working group meeting after next month's FPRAC meeting and get back to that conversation. That basically is up to people in this room as to whether they think that's a useful exercise.

Are there any questions about the proposed rule, since we're all here?

MR. ALLEN: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any questions. I had a couple of pointers I wanted to—

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Sure.

MR. ALLEN: —inform the members about. The Director actually had a phone call earlier this week with some of the members of the Committee just to give them a heads-up about the proposed regulation.

What we are doing in the proposed rule is actually not exactly what the Committee recommended, so I wanted to explain why there is a slight difference. When OPM took a look at the FPRAC recommendation, it was apparent that it was a very complicated issue. The issue of whether the Joint Base should be defined to one wage area or another is not really a concern. The complicating factor was that it was difficult to decide whether it was appropriate to define the Joint Base to the Philadelphia wage area in its entirety or to the New York wage area in its entirety.

So this is why this took a while for OPM to come to a final decision on this. We are putting this proposal out as a proposed rule, as the Chairman has said, with a 30-day period for public comment. Based on our review of those comments, we would expect to have a final regulation out before the end of this calendar year.

The proposed rule is proposing to establish a new criterion that would indicate that when there's a contiguous joint base that is split between two different wage areas—and the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst is the only one that does this—that the higher average wage schedule that would otherwise be applicable to one side of the Joint Base should be the wage schedule that would be applicable to all the employees on the Joint Base. So OPM is seeking public comment on that, and I guess that's basically all I had to cover on that.

If anybody has any questions, I'm happy to answer questions about what the impact of this would be.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Steve?

MR. LANDIS: Just the one question I would ask is at what point, then, would the workers there see the wage area move.

MR. ALLEN: What we've done with this one is actually speed up the regulatory

review process on it. As I've mentioned in the past, it typically takes anywhere between 6 months and a year once a regulation is proposed before it becomes final. This one has been sped up, so we are moving forward on this more rapidly than otherwise would.

The issue is that, typically, there is a 90-day review period within any administration to review a regulation. We are speeding up that process, though. So I would estimate that we would have a final regulation out before the end of this calendar year, and it would be effective 30 days after publication of the final regulation. But I still don't expect that to drag on into next year, though. I would expect the implementation to be within this calendar year as well.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything else on this?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: That brings up the review of the transcript of our last meeting. Does anyone have any corrections or changes beyond those about which we already heard from you?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: If not, is there any disagreement with adopting the transcript of the last meeting?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Hearing no disagreement, the transcript is adopted.

Thank you.

And that brings us to Old Business, and the first item is the issue of Shawnee County, where we have two Old Business items and about 10 or so New Business items, all of which relate to this topic.

Perhaps I should ask Rob and Mark to frame the issue a little bit before we get into discussion with our guests on the phone.

I should also ask everybody who is on the phone, every time you speak, please state your name because we have to produce a transcript of this meeting, and it's going to be near impossible to do that if we don't know who is talking. So please state your name, if you're on the phone, every time you speak. Okay?

With that, do either of you want to start?

MR. SHORE: I can start.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Rob, go ahead.

MR. SHORE: Yeah. Good morning. Back in March of this year, the National Association of Government Employees submitted a letter, which is Old Business, I guess, (a), 611-NAGE-1, and the letter brought to the attention of the FPRAC an issue that was raised to us that the employees at the Topeka VAMC were working or performing work in the Kansas City wage area, and the question was whether that wage area should either be abolished, the Topeka wage area, or if the VA should be pulled out of the Topeka wage area and put into the Kansas City wage area.

So, with all of that as the background, the gentlemen on the phone will be talking about the documents that I submitted as—614-NAGE-1 through -7. And I would let Mark speak about what was put together by OPM, and then I can lay out which person is talking about which document in case somebody forgets to state their name. It will be on the record as to who is speaking about each thing.

MR. ALLEN: I guess I'll just start by saying I don't think we're going to come to a resolution on this one today because we've got a number of documents that we need to look at

and consider. So I'd like to take some time after this meeting myself to look at what is being provided by the local area, consider it very carefully.

The document 612-MGT-1, which the Management members introduced back on May 9, 2016, recommended that there be no change in the current Topeka, Kansas, wage area.

Basically, what we looked at here was whether the Topeka, Kansas, wage area continues to meet the requirements to be a separate wage area with the idea under the Federal Wage System that wages should be determined on a local basis as much as possible. We looked at this wage area and found there were approximately 788 FWS employees in the Topeka area. As such, it currently meets all of the regulatory requirements established by OPM to be a separate wage area. There are about 350 employees, about half the workforce in the Topeka wage area, in Shawnee County, which is synonymous with Topeka, Kansas. When we look at the regulatory criteria that OPM uses to define Federal Wage System wage area boundaries, we found, of course, that the distance, the primary criterion that we look at, would favor keeping Shawnee County in the same wage area as it currently is and continue doing surveys in Topeka. Commuting patterns also favor Topeka because people are living and working in the same county in most cases, and under the similarities in overall population, total private sector employment, and kinds and sizes of private industrial establishments criteria, we also found that those criteria favor retaining Shawnee County in the Topeka wage area.

There's another statement we provided because we had had questions about the degree to which employees of the Topeka VA Medical Center were working together with employees of the Leavenworth VA Medical Center, so to speak.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: You're on 614-OPM-1 now; is that right, Mark?

MR. ALLEN: No. This is still 612-MGT-1 on page 5. There's another document

under 614-OPM-1, which I'll get to in a minute.

The reason that we were asked to review this was because there was some concern expressed from a local area, the Topeka VA Medical Center, that employees at the Topeka VA Medical Center were working very closely together to make—I'm not characterizing that too strongly, but that they were working together with employees at the Leavenworth, Kansas, VA Medical Center.

We had touched base with the Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters staff, who reached out to the local human resources staff there, and found that there are occasional instances in which employees may need to go to another facility, but that's not the typical routine for employees, and that it doesn't serve as a basis for saying that the two VA Medical Centers should be considered to be in the same local labor market and be paid from a single wage schedule.

And, Mr. Chairman, if you would like, I can go over what's in 614-OPM-1 as well.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Yes. I think that would probably be useful and, I believe, it is in response to some questions that NAGE submitted; is that correct?

MR. ALLEN: Yes. The National Association of Government Employees had posed some questions to OPM staff. First question would be, What effect, if any, would removing Shawnee County, Kansas, from the Topeka, Kansas, survey area have on the rates of pay within the Topeka wage area? Basically, what would happen if that were to be implemented by OPM? If Shawnee County were to be removed from the Topeka survey area, local wage surveys would no longer meet OPM criteria for conducting local wage surveys in the Topeka wage area. There would not be enough industries or establishments or comparable private sector

jobs left in the smaller survey area to support a local wage survey for Topeka.

Question No. 2: Is there data available regarding Federal Wage System employees leaving the Topeka VA Medical Center to go to the Leavenworth VA Medical Center? The response that we got back from VA on that was that the human resources office of the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System has indicated that no FWS employees left the Topeka VA Medical Center to work at the Leavenworth VA Medical Center during the last year, and by "work at," I believe what they're saying is nobody transferred from the Topeka VAMC to the Leavenworth VAMC last year.

Question No. 3: Is there data available regarding FWS employees moving from the Topeka wage area to the Kansas City wage area? The answer to that one is that OPM does not track data on the movements of FWS employees or reassignments of FWS employees from one wage area to another.

Question No. 4 was, Which counties are defined to the Kansas City-Overland Park-Kansas City General Schedule locality pay area, and does the entire Topeka wage area coincide with that locality pay area? We've provided a map that shows that the Kansas City-Overland Park-Kansas City locality pay area extends into the Topeka wage area.

Question 5: How is commuting distance measured? When we measure commuting distances, we actually look at a couple of different things. We measure road distances from the location of the largest FWS employer in a county to the largest cities and host installations in nearby survey areas. The largest FWS employer in Shawnee County is Forbes Air Force Base. I should add there that the Air Force base is not the host installation for the Topeka wage area. OPM uses the Census Bureau's county-to-counter worker flow data to examine local commuting patterns between counties.

Question 6: How far apart are the Topeka VA Medical Center and the Leavenworth VA Medical Center? We measured distance by road. It's around 65 miles from one medical center to the other.

Question 7, which was the last question, the host activity for the Topeka wage area is Fort Riley. Fort Riley is located in portions of Geary and Riley Counties, Kansas. Geary County is a survey county, but Riley County is not. And then the question was, Why is Riley County not included in the survey area? The reason for this goes back to how the wage areas were originally established and then reviewed by the Government Accounting Office, now the Government Accountability Office, which did an audit shortly after the Federal Wage System was established by statute, and the GAO at that time said that it was their opinion that any county that had more than 100 Federal Wage System employees in it should be part of a survey area. So that was the reason that Geary County at that time was added to the survey area and Riley County was not. Currently, Riley County only has 24 Federal Wage System employees, so we would not recommend that it be added to the survey area now.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: If someone else joined us as a guest, if you could announce yourself for the recorder, please?

MR. CURRY: I'm Tim Curry. I'm with OPM. I'm sorry. I was distracted with an e-mail.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Quite all right. Thank you. We've got to keep a record of all that.

Rob, did you want to kick off the discussion from your end?

MR. SHORE: Yeah.

Thanks, Mark.

NAGE introduced seven different documents that will be talked about today by the people on the phone, and mainly what these documents are in reference to is, I guess, what Mark just talked about, page 5 of 612-MGT-1 and the, I guess, assertion by NAGE and then the VA's response that there were instances where employees from the Topeka VA are working with or working in the Kansas City wage area.

So NAGE-1, which is a list of HVAC coverage, all these documents were provided directly from the employees at the Topeka VA. Specifically, Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Singer, and Mr. Clearwater, who are on the phone, provided the documents, and rather than myself explain what they are, since they are there, NAGE thought it made more sense for them to give explanations and answer questions people might have about the documents.

But, just briefly, Mr. Zimmerman will speak about NAGE-1, which is the HVAC coverage document.

Mr. Singer will speak about NAGE-2, which is an e-mail to him and some attached ledgers. He'll explain where the ledgers came from and who keeps them. They're obviously not an official VA document, so he'll explain what they are.

NAGE-3, Mr. Zimmerman will also talk about, and what I've asked for him to do is speak about it with NAGE-6 because those two are referring to the same group of employees. So rather than jump around, it made more sense to have him address those two documents at the same time.

Mr. Clearwater, who is the local president for NAGE there, will speak about NAGE-4, which is an e-mail that he provided to us and was sent to him.

NAGE-5 and NAGE-7 will be spoken about again by Mr. Zimmerman, and they, too, are connected to one another, and those are regarding an e-mail that he received and some

documents that he got to support, I guess, the statement in there from the CBOC manager, and he'll explain what all the different terms are so we're all fully understanding what the documents are, and they will answer questions as they come up, unless, Chairman Friedman, would you prefer that they finish and then people ask questions at the end? Whatever you think is easiest for clarity of the record.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Why don't we just proceed, and if people have questions as we go along, that's fine with me.

MR. SHORE: Okay. With that, I would ask Mr. Zimmerman, I guess, to introduce himself and remind everybody on the phone, before you speak, to introduce yourself for the record again, but before we do that, did somebody here have a question?

ATTENDEE: No. No question on that.

MR. SHORE: Okay. So, Mr. Zimmerman, if you could introduce yourself. And if everybody, before they speak, can state their name and what their position is at the VA, so we all have an understanding of who the employees are, that would be helpful. So, with that, I would ask Mr. Zimmerman to start.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Okay. I'm Victor Zimmerman, and I am a Wage Grade 10 Maintenance Mechanic at the VA Hospital in Topeka, Kansas.

As far as the NAGE-1 document, for checkpoint sensors, what they do is these check sensors are—they're part of a central system for monitoring temperatures and humidity, such as refrigerators, you know, and freezers, blanket warmer, medical fridge, and sterile closets and so on, and what it does is, like I said, it measures the temperature and humidity of a room if it's placed in a room as well. And what happens is if these sensors trigger an alert, it could either be that the batteries are low or could possibly be that the temperature has raised, and all of that

stuff is monitored here in Topeka, Kansas, by our HVAC shop.

And what happens, if there is a situation that arises where there is an alert, then HVAC mechanics, which are Wage Grade 10 employees, have to either—they have to go to these different facilities, and on this list, you will see that there are several that are here in Topeka at the hospital, but they're also what we call CBOCs, which are community-based outpatient clinics. And we have one in Fort Scott, Kansas, which is in Bourbon County, which is in the Kansas City wage area. So, if there is a problem that arises, which has before and will obviously continue because, you know, things happen—and so people from Topeka will be sent to those places and have been sent to those places. So we have one that's Fort Scott and one in Lawrence. Both facilities are in the Kansas City wage area.

MR. BUCK: I have a question.

Looking over the data provided, looking at the dispatch sheets here, it would seem for those two Kansas City locations that out of 193 calls, only 7 involve that. So we're talking less than 3.5 percent?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir.

MR. BUCK: That's not a whole lot.

MR. DAVEY: Mr. Zimmerman, I'm trying to figure out the time frame that the sheets that we have here cover. Is it just 1 month, or is it a year or 3 years?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] It's continuous. It's monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

MR. DAVEY: Item No. 1 through Item No. 3, what are the years and months that this covers? I'm trying to determine frequency.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Oh, as far as the sensors themselves?

MR. DAVEY: Time interval.

MR. SHORE: Mr. Zimmerman, what they're trying to find out, what they're asking, is with NAGE-1, there's six pages here. What is the month—how many months does this cover or weeks or a year? What's the time period that this document is covering, if you—

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Oh, this was something that was pulled by the work leader for that shop. This was for that day. Like, I said, this is a list, and the readings on here can change at any time, but it is monitored, like I said, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year long.

MR. SHORE: So the answer there was—and this is 1 day's worth of work for the employees who are monitoring the HVACs and equipment at the different community-based outpatient clinics throughout, I guess Topeka and Kansas City wage area?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir.

MR. SHORE: Okay.

MR. DAVEY: The community-based outpatient clinics, we see two listed here. How many does your group cover besides the two that are outside the area here? How many do you cover that are inside your wage area?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Beside our wage area, there are other community-based patient clinics. Basically, there's the two that are in the Kansas City wage area.

MR. DAVEY: What's the number that are not in the Kansas area that your shop covers?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] I'm going to look because it's Junction City and Emporia, and numbers for Junction City—

MR. DAVEY: No, no. I don't mean the number of the instances. I mean, how

many community centers?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Okay. There are two total in the Topeka wage area.

MR. DAVEY: There's two in Topeka area and two in the Kansas area that your shop covers; is that true? I didn't—

MR. SHORE: You had said there are two CBOCs in the Kansas City wage area and two in the Topeka wage area that the employees—that the Wage Grade employees at the Topeka VA cover. Is that correct?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir.

MR. SHORE: All right.

Are there any other questions on 614-NAGE-1?

MR. ALLEN: I have a couple of questions.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir.

MR. ALLEN: I just want to get this clear in my head. For things that happened at the community-based centers, the ones that are highlighted for Scott and Lawrence, does somebody actually have to physically go to one of those locations?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir, they do.

MR. ALLEN: Okay. Thank you.

And when somebody does go there, are they dispatched from the Topeka VA Medical Center, and if so, do they get to one of those locations with a federal motor vehicle, or do they drive their personal vehicle and get mileage to get there?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] No. They drive a—it's a GSA vehicle.

MR. ALLEN: Okay. That's all I had.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Any other questions on this one?

MR. DAVEY: Well, I'd just like to note that the equipment apparently at the CBOCs, Fort Scott and Lawrence, seem to be operating quite a bit more efficiently than the other ones. It's only 3 percent of the calls that come for those places.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] What it shows is a record where they've been monitored, not actually where there's been instances of problems for that day. As far as I know, we all—

MR. BUCK: So they actually—on the sheet here, were they actually dispatched to those locations?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] This sheet for that day, nobody was dispatched to go.

MR. SHORE: I'd also like to add, just for clarity's sake, some of the—to get to Mr. Davey's point on percentage, some of these other things that are here are actually at the Topeka VA itself. So these guys are monitoring the Topeka VA as well as the CBOCs that fall both within Topeka and Kansas City wage areas, while the Leavenworth employees who are in the Kansas City wage area—correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Zimmerman—are not monitoring the CBOCs that are in their own wage area.

So the CBOC monitoring is all based out of the Topeka VA, and in addition, those guys are monitoring their own hospital.

MR. DAVEY: And I think that may be true, but I think the reason would be that physically—they're physically closer to the locations. Fort Scott, as I understand it, is closer to Topeka than it is to Fort Leavenworth. So if you drove from Leavenworth to Fort Scott instead of Topeka to Fort Scott, you'd be making—adding additional miles, additional time. So I'm pretty

sure the VA would have organized themselves geographically and assigned the CBOs to the facilities, the large facilities that are closer to them.

MR. SHORE: Should we go to the next document?

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Unless somebody has another question or comment on this one?

MR. DAVEY: Well, I'd just like to echo Mr. Buck's comment—that the frequency of items here is 3.5 percent or less, and I heard Mr. Zimmerman say that actually no one was dispatched to respond to this, so I'm not sure it has a big impact.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Well, I guess I'm just kind of curious. So what does happen if this—exactly what is this information? If you don't actually go out and fix something once there's a problem, what is done? I'm just kind of unclear on that.

MR. SHORE: I can answer from what I understand, and, Mr. Zimmerman, if you want to correct me, that's fine.

This specific day, these were incidents that were monitored; however, if there is something that needs to be specifically, hands on, dealt with for a fix, et cetera, if something breaks down, they would dispatch somebody in a government vehicle—I think as responding to Mark's question—to fix it at the CBOC themselves, and they would come from the Topeka VA and go to whichever CBOC it might be. We can ask or we can work with the VA or Mr. Zimmerman can try to pull maybe more extensive records. We can see if we can get more extensive records that show how frequently those specific incidences occur, so we can have a better idea of how often employees from the Topeka VA are actually going to deal with HVAC issues at the CBOCs.

MR. ALLEN: I'd be interested in knowing how many times a month is an HVAC

mechanic asked to go into the neighboring wage area to work.

It may not be a major issue because this type of thing does happen nationwide where an FWS employee who has a responsibility for maintaining HVAC equipment may not be working 40 hours a week just at their official duty station. So if there is extra time available, they may be asked to go into a neighboring wage area and fix some equipment there. It is not all that unusual for an employee to be asked to do that, but they would be paid from their official duty station location in all cases.

MR. SHORE: Should we move on to the next document?

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Unless there's another question on this one, okay.

Yeah, let's move on.

MR. SHORE: Okay. Mr. Singer, if you could just explain—introduce yourself, state your position, and then explain what 614-NAGE-2 is. It's an e-mail that's sent to you and then some handwritten notes, I think, about—that cover a period from 7/29/2014 up until May of this year.

MR. SINGER: [via phone] My name is Patrick Singer. I'm a Wage Grade worker. I am—[audio break]—department—[audio break].

This document here is an e-mail sent to me from Sam Metzger, the Fleet Manager for Topeka when I came to work here and served in that position for about 5, 5-1/2 years, and he is no longer—no longer has anything to do with the vehicles. It is Angelique Taylor [ph] that—[audio break]—give us a letter just stating that Grounds Department does go to Kansas City, Leavenworth—[audio break]—and deliver cars, GSA vehicles when we do—with the GSA exchange program—[audio break]—pick up new ones, and that's basically what—what his e-mail is about here and just confirming that it is the Grounds Department that assists him in

carrying out all these tasks.

MR. SHORE: Any question on the cover document itself?

[No audible response.]

MR. SHORE: Mr. Singer, you cut out for a second. So just so it's clear for the record, Mr. Metzger is no longer in the position of Fleet Manager, but he previously was, and that's why Mr. Singer reached out to him.

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Correct.

MR. SHORE: And the current Fleet Manager is the individual who sent NAGE-3, so we'll have—this kind of just gives an idea of an extended period of time.

MR. DAVEY: Are we going to be able to talk about the attachments, or are we just talking about the cover sheet at this point?

MR. SHORE: No. I was going to ask that Mr. Singer to explain the attachments, where they came from and what they're showing, and obviously, for the record, all the highlights on these documents came from the gentleman—when they sent them to us, to my office, they were highlighted, trying to show for me and for everybody the things that they thought established their case.

MR. DAVEY: One question. The GS locality area for Kansas City was established recently, was it not?

MR. ALLEN: In January this year.

MR. DAVEY: In January of this year. So the items we're talking about here, if we're talking about somebody that's there in 2009, then it was a RUS location; is that correct?

MR. SHORE: Yes. The change occurred this year, I guess, and that's part of the reason this became something that stood out for the Wage Grade employees at the Topeka VA.

I think the point of the extended period of time here, same with going back to 2014, is just to show this is an ongoing situation. It's been this way for quite some time. We can focus for our purposes, if you'd like, on the later stuff, or we can look at everything.

MR. DAVEY: I'm willing to look at everything. I have no issues with that.

MR. SHORE: Okay. Mr. Singer, can you explain what the rest of this packet is?

MR. SINGER: [via phone] When I became a work leader in 2010, I just maintained references in case I needed to go back and check on anything. It just gives basic, quick reference to what we were working on or doing that day. So this is just my own personal—[audio break]—department.

And after this, there's—[audio break]—started in 2011, but we wanted to keep this pretty recent, so we stick from '14 out, but it states here on 8/1—[audio break]—can go to be worked on, and any time I reference any of these, it's a police vehicle—[audio break]—specialty equipment put in the vehicles that the police require.

7/12 of '14—[audio break]—23 of '14 delivered Durango to 911 custom in Kansas City—[audio break]—13/15 delivery an electric van to Olathe and pick one up. We have two electric—[audio break]—on our campus that—[audio break]—Olathe to be repaired if they need repairs because they are a factory rep, and Olathe is actually part of the Kansas City area.

On 6/10 of '15, police car to 911 custom in Olathe—[audio break]—custom in Olathe to pick up a police car, and I'd like to reference that to—[audio break]—picking up and delivering a vehicle, it does take two employees to make the trip—[audio break]—15 of '15, one person to Leavenworth for a vehicle exchange; 9/18 or '15, deliver electric van to Olathe for repairs; 2/26 or '16, Columbia, Missouri, to deliver a truck—[audio break]—Angelique—[audio break]—19 or '16, assisted Angelique in delivering—[audio break].

That's basically what I have here, but as Sam had stated in his e-mail, he doesn't really see this letting up. We have—last week—[audio break]—to—

MR. BUCK: I have a question. Why are these vehicles not being put on a car carrier or being towed?

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Well, when we do the small electric vans, we do because they're not built to drive on the street.

MR. BUCK: So it's actually some sort of vehicle carrier or a tow truck. They're put on top, and some company or contractor is taking that to the destination?

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Oh, we have—we have trailers here in the Grounds Department that we load them on and take them.

MR. BUCK: Okay. That was my question.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything on this one, or any questions on this one?

MR. DAVEY: I'd like you to know that we appreciate your sending this information in, Mr. Singer.

I'm looking at the frequency of these trips, and it doesn't appear to be all that frequent to me, a couple times a year, three, four times a year, and I'm wondering how much interaction there is. You travel to these areas; however, there's no interaction with any Wage Grade or GS person when you get there. I think—aren't you taking, let's say, a police vehicle to a non-federal facility for repair?

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Yes.

MR. DAVEY: Okay.

MR. SHORE: The majority of the examples that were provided by Mr. Singer, I believe, fit with what Mr. Davey just explained, non-federal, taking into that area. There are

some examples—and I realize there's only a couple in here—where they're actually going to the Leavenworth facility, but my understanding fits with what Mr. Davey said.

MR. DAVEY: A lot of times, the information we're seeing here is federal employee going to a private industry location dealing with private industry personnel? I think that's a proper statement.

MR. SINGER: [via phone] Correct.

MR. DAVEY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything else on this one?

[No audible response.]

MR. SHORE: The next one is NAGE-3, which also Mr. Zimmerman will speak about, and he'll speak about it in connection with NAGE-6. And I will let Mr. Zimmerman start.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] I'm going to speak in reference to NAGE-3.

A statement from a service-line manager, business office, which has authority over the shuttle system in—at the—well, within the Eastern Kansas Health Care System, which encompasses the CBOCs in both wage areas and also the Kansas City VA and the Leavenworth itself—anyway, here she states that Topeka WG drivers do provide a shuttle service, Monday through Friday, that includes stops in Leavenworth and Kansas City. She said that she didn't have time or a chance to put it in memo format.

And what I have here with this is the—part of the June 2016 log, but I'd also like to state that this is a constant chain that she stated, Monday through Friday, to provide shuttle service for the patients, but at the different facilities. And you'll notice here that Mr. Lester, one of the bus drivers, he puts the official purpose down. He puts "KLT." Well, what he's referencing, Kansas City, Leavenworth, and Topeka, and this is a fixed and scheduled bus route

in Kansas City VA, Leavenworth VA, and the Topeka VA, and this particular bus does not go to CBOCs. And the way that route is laid out is he starts—they start in Topeka at this VA. They go to the Leavenworth VA, Kansas City VA, and from Kansas City back to Leavenworth, back to Topeka. This is a daily occurrence, Monday through Friday, and the way that works is they go here to base, but they have to sit and wait for the patients who have appointments. For example, if a patient lives in Topeka or, say, they live near Topeka, well, they can drive to Topeka and then use this shuttle service to handle their appointments at these other two medical facilities, one in Kansas City and in Leavenworth. And that is their route, and as you can see, the total miles driven on this trip varies from 201 to—one is 217. Maybe there's road construction, but it appears that it's usually around 201 to about 203 miles for this trip per day.

And I'd also like to note that the western boundary of the Kansas City wage area is the Douglas County and the Shawnee County line, which if you look at a map by road, is about 12 miles from the Topeka VA Medical Center. So that would show that out of these 200 miles that this particular Wage Grade employee is only spending about 24 miles inside the Topeka wage area every single day. The rest of those miles and the rest of those hours are spent in the Kansas City wage area every single day.

MR. BUCK: How many round trips, daily trips? Just one? How many round trip, daily trips, are there? How many times does it make that orbit?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] It's usually one because, like I said, when they go to these different medical centers, they have to wait for patients. The way it would work is in Topeka, pick these people up, go to Leavenworth, drop them off, then go to Kansas City and drop them off, wait in Kansas City for these patients to get done with their appointments, then go back to Leavenworth and pick up any patients there or possibly wait for them with their business,

and then drive back to Topeka.

And these buses are actually parked behind the ground shop which is near the carpenter shop, which is the shop that I work out of, and these guys actually get to work at 7 a.m., which you can see here in the period of use, and at 3:30 p.m., that is the end of their shift. Well, they don't actually get back to the Topeka Medical Center until about 3 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. to get ready to go home at the end of the day.

MR. BUCK: Thank you.

MR. ALLEN: The list here, the motor vehicle trip log, seems to indicate there are two drivers; is that correct?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir, there are.

MR. ALLEN: Do they have official duty stations in Topeka?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir, they do.

MR. ALLEN: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything else on this one?

MR. DAVEY: I have a question. Maybe not about this one, but if I lived in Kansas City and I needed to go to Topeka is there a shuttle starting in Kansas City, or do they only start in Topeka? I would expect there might be two routes going at the same time.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] And I understand that. That's something that I don't have the answer to. The people that I inquired with are these two bus drivers and their service line manager.

MR. SHORE: We can look into that.

MR. DAVEY: If someone were in Kansas City driving to Topeka to help the delivery of the patients there, is there an argument that we would make to make their pay the

Topeka pay?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Well, I don't think that would be fair to them because they're spending the majority of their time in their own wage area. Like I said, it's only 12 miles from the Topeka VA Medical Center to the western boundary line at Douglas County, so the majority of their time, you know, if that was the case, would actually be inside their own wage area. Whereas, with our bus drivers based out of Topeka, the majority of their time is not within their own wage area.

MR. DAVEY: I used to drive a route, and I used to drive 325 miles round trip every day, and it never occurred to me that I should be asking for the pay of that far location I went to. Maybe I should have thought about that at the time.

MR. SHORE: Well, to be fair to what Mr. Zimmerman is getting at—and what I think the whole underlying point of why NAGE brought this up— is that right now the VA is looking at 12 miles from the border of the other wage area, and the point is that that wage area really should encompass the Topeka hospital. And anything else that might come from that would obviously have to be discussed, but that's why this was brought up in connection with the change made to GS employees in January.

MR. ALLEN: What I've been hearing so far is that there—this is actually lining up pretty well with what was in the Management document, which is there are some instances where Wage Grade employees are asked to go between wage areas. But what I'm seeing so far is that it's limited to physical plant maintenance, and in that case, only a few employees and a bus route driver, which makes sense. If the VA is employing a bus driver to go between VA medical centers, but they're assigning that person to work at Topeka, then it's appropriate to pay the employee from Topeka wage schedule. If there was a bus route that originated in Kansas City,

then the bus driver should be paid from the Kansas City wage schedule.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Anything else on this one?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: We can move on, then.

MR. SHORE: So that was 3 and 6.

President Clearwater, if you could just explain what NAGE-4 is, an e-mail that you received. I guess, could you first state who you received it from and then what it's showing?

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] Robert Clearwater from NAGE Local R14-8.

I received this e-mail from Angelique Taylor, who is the current Fleet Manager—[audio break]—of the e-mail that—[audio break]—Metzger who was the former—[audio break]—all of the trips made—[audio break]—well, all of the trips that were made and the highlighted ones were the ones made outside of our catchment area.

[Pause.]

MR. SHORE: Mr. Clearwater?

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] Yes.

MR. SHORE: You cut out again.

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] Sorry.

MR. SHORE: We heard you state who it was from, and I think that was the last thing we heard.

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] Okay. The current Fleet Manager and—this is, more or less, a continuation of the e-mail from Sam Metzger—[audio break]—that was transported or transferred to other places outside of our—[audio break].

[Pause.]

MR. SHORE: I can summarize, just so it's clear what he was saying. This is from the current—as he said, Angelique Taylor holds the position that Sam Metzger used to hold, which is NAGE-2, and it's showing, I guess, a more recent version of what NAGE-2 showed, which is employees going to CBOCs in Leavenworth wage area. It's, I guess, a list sent from the current supervisor to Mr. Clearwater.

MR. BUCK: From what I understood, I thought they were transporting vehicles to these different locations, or are these for service calls? Because my question would be why—what was the reason why these vehicles were transported. We got the date. We got the vehicle. We got the location. But we don't have a reason.

MR. SHORE: This was from the supervisor. I guess he wrote it up—or she. So I don't know if Mr. Clearwater has that answer as to the reason.

I do see some of them say sent to Leavenworth, and then it says "don't remember," if you look at that middle one.

MR. BUCK: Yeah.

MR. SHORE: I know it's a sheet. She put this together, so I can't provide a direct answer for that. We can ask if we can get more information as to the reasoning behind this.

MR. BUCK: Please.

MR. SHORE: I have no issue doing that.

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] As to they're highlighted, also, they were sent there for repair.

MR. BUCK: A vehicle was sent to be repaired?

ROBERT CLEARWATER: [via phone] Yes.

MR. SHORE: The ones that say there's two—if you look, the last two say repairs, I think what he just was getting at.

MR. BUCK: Yeah.

MR. SHORE: The other ones, it doesn't look like they say, and we can ask and see what information we can get on that.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Any other questions or comments on this one?

MR. ALLEN: I think one thing that would be helpful to know—our records indicate that there are around 114 Federal Wage System employees at the VA Medical Center in Topeka. I'd be interested in knowing, out of that 114, how many are routinely asked to go into a neighboring wage area, because right now I'm only seeing a handful of instances where people are being asked to go into a neighboring wage area. And to me, it makes sense from a maintenance management perspective that occasionally somebody would be asked to go elsewhere to deliver a vehicle or check on the functioning of a piece of equipment.

MR. DAVEY: As Mr. Shore said, this is a continuation of NAGE-2, and it continues to show that it's not that frequent that this delivery of these vehicles for repair is occurring.

MR. SHORE: Yeah. NAGE-5 and NAGE-7 also can be looked at together. Mr. Zimmerman will explain what they are again, but the first one is an e-mail he received, and the second are work orders. And with that, Mr. Zimmerman?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] [Audio break]— and NAGE-5 is an e-mail— well, a statement sent as an e-mail to me for this meeting, and it is from the CBOC manager who manages all of the CBOCs within the Eastern Kansas Health Care System, which is—it's two within our wage area and two outside of our wage area, and she says here, "Good morning. I'm

stating that since I have been CBOC manager, I have asked several times to have service provided to the CBOCs east of Shawnee County," as she's referring to the Kansas City wage area there. "I have had furniture delivered many times and have had maintenance completed for several tasks of VA equipment. Thanks to their valuable resources, they help keep our veterans in a safe environment. Many times, tasks were completed—[audio break]—fashion as another service line had found regulations, and we would have been cited without their quick turnaround service.

And what this was about was, a number of work orders that I could actually pull, and one thing that is here at—some of these work orders were not handled necessarily by our shops because the—some of this stuff was handled by the biomed shop, which it does fall under engineering. And to the best of my knowledge, most of their employees are GS employees, but at the time—and you'll look on here. The assigned tech was a Neils Anderson [ph], and he was actually a Wage Grade 11. Why that was the case, I don't know, but he was the one that was primarily sent to work on this equipment for biomed.

And notice here as well that we have a work order for Fort Scott and Emporia where locksmiths had to make keys for the different facilities, and Emporia does fall within our own wage area. It's in Lyon County, and Fort Scott, again, is in—Fort Scott is in Kansas City wage area. And, actually, Fort Scott is about—I believe it's 138 miles from the—[audio break]—VA Medical center and—

ATTENDEE: Which? Which one?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] —Fort Scott is actually 118 miles from Fort Leavenworth. So, actually, the Leavenworth facility is closer to Fort Scott than the Topeka Medical Center.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Any other questions or discussion about any of these exhibits from NAGE?

MR. DAVEY: I don't understand some of this e-mail message from Margaret Rosthauser. Another service line had found regulations. I don't know what that means. And it looks like because of whatever that is, they asked for emergency backup or emergency help, and I'm trying to understand. Is this an ongoing thing where you're required to do this, or is this just someone found some regulation and we had to call somebody else to come in?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] It's a little bit of both. At this VA, they try to do their own inspections and not just the JCAHO inspections, commission inspections, and they try to do those inspections somewhat frequently just so they—they have their own oversight and providing a good environment for the patients, and so, yes, anytime there is something that comes up, then, yes, the engineering Wage Grade workers from Topeka have to go to any of these CBOCs.

And it is true that we have four CBOCs, two of which are in Kansas City wage area, two in the Topeka wage area, but we cover all of them. But one of the busier CBOCs is actually in Lawrence, which falls into the Kansas City wage area, which it's actually not very far from Topeka. I don't even believe it's 30 miles away. So, geographically, it is closer to Topeka than Kansas City or Leavenworth.

But, also, there are other things that are non-emergency, such as having furniture delivered. We have a Wage Grade worker that works with the interior designer, and that employee is actually under EMS. And I was not able to get any documentation on that, and that was another reason that I reached out to the CBOC manager because she was actually on the other end of this work that was done. You know, she operated and, you know, made a statement

of the facts on that.

And the things that this Wage Grade worker does, which I believe he's a Wage Grade 5 maintenance worker, and he works with the interior designer, who is now a GS-11 employee. And he goes and he'll hang things such as hand sanitizer dispensers, soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, picture. He'll—furniture, some—[audio break]—furniture, set up the furniture. When he does this, he works hand in hand with the interior designer because she managers him, and that is another deal that frequency of that is—it's not a daily thing. It's not a weekly thing, but it does happen sometimes once a month, maybe sometimes twice a month. Then there might be 2 months in between. There's not really a fixed schedule on that. It's just kind of as it comes up, it gets handled.

MR. DAVEY: I am looking at the work orders, I guess it is, and it seems to me that most of them are what I'd call routine maintenance in defibrillators; is that true?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Yes, sir.

MR. DAVEY: So that would be like once-a-year kind of event—or actually, it says semiannual, so that would be done twice a year.

MR. SHORE: The only other thing—and I don't know if Mr. Zimmerman said this. He seemed to have cut out a little bit, but the work orders are not—this is not all the work orders of all—this does not cover all the work that was documented for a Wage Grade employee at Topeka going to one of the other CBOCs. This is what he was able to pull when I asked him since the last meeting coming up to this one. My understanding is not everything is always put in as a work order. You know, if the CBOC manager asks him to go do something, it's not always done in that form, and so that would be the only thing that I have to add at this time.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] This is Victor. May I speak?

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Yes.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] And another situation that is somewhat—well, actually directly attached to—[audio break]—quarters is the situation—if you'll notice here on the agenda list that there was supposed to have been a Mr. William Loder [ph] who was a supervisor for the electrical and maintenance shop, here we call it the PMI shop for Preventative Maintenance and Inspection. For some reason, he was told that management was prohibited—[audio break]—in these meetings. He was actually going to make his statement as a member of management—[audio break]—that these things do happen, and don't necessarily happen every day, but they happen more often than the work orders show. And those are things he was going to say, but he was not allowed to participate in the meeting because he was, in fact, a—[audio break].

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: That's too bad, but you haven't been able to, more or less, summarize what he would have said? Is there a great deal more than that or—

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I don't know if he heard me.

MR. SHORE: Mr. Zimmerman, the question was whether you were able to summarize what Mr. Loder would have said. It sounded to me like you were saying that, basically, what I had just said, which was that there weren't work orders for all of this work, but it happens frequently. I don't want to put—the word you used was "more often than not" or something or—what was the statement you said?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] It's not exactly very often, but it's more often than the work orders show.

MR. DAVEY: So if the work orders show twice a year, I hear you suggesting that

it might be more than twice a year?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] No, sir. These work orders are for the biomed shop, and Mr. Loder is the supervisor over the electrical and maintenance shop. And he was only going to speak on behalf of his shop, not the biomed shop, because he has nothing to do with that shop. But the locksmith is a maintenance mechanic that falls under his shop, which all of the keys or all of the CBOCs and also Topeka VA Hospital are all maintained by the maintenance mechanic that covers locksmith duties here in Topeka.

MR. SHORE: Okay. I don't have anything else at this time.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I want to thank the folks on the phone, Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Singer, Mr. Clearwater. Did I get everybody? Thank you so much for this information.

MR. ALLEN: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: And we do appreciate it.

I think I would agree with Mark's point that we're probably not ready to make any decisions in this matter today, but we've begun the conversation by collecting this information.

MR. SHORE: Agreed.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I think we need some more analysis.

Before we turn to that, is there any discussion on this question right now?

MR. ALLEN: Well, it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that this actually gets into the issue that you were mentioning about further examining in a working group setting the closeness and organizational relationships between federal activities because I don't think that the issues that have been raised here in the last couple of meetings are really unique to Topeka VA Medical Center.

There are logical reasons why Federal Wage System employees would be asked to work occasionally across wage areas, but then the underlying rationale for the Federal Wage System is that employees should be paid according to where their official duty station is located.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Are you suggesting we move this specific issue to the working group for the time being? Is that what you are suggesting, Mark?

MR. ALLEN: I think the two are so intertwined that I think that there is value in taking a look at the bigger picture rather than just the Topeka VA Medical Center in isolation.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I don't know how—do you want to comment on that?

MR. SHORE: I don't have—I don't know anything about the other—I mean, all I know is what has been brought to my attention here, so I can't make really any comments or statements.

I guess before we would say yes, move to the working group, I would need some time to speak to the guys and probably speak to the other unions. Since Candace and Jacque aren't here, maybe we can discuss it next meeting and let you all know.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I think they're still on the phone. I hope we got Candace and Jacque. Are you on the phone? Gone?

MS. ARCHER: [audio break] Yes. I think it is probably a good idea for us to speak privately before we move it to the working group. I wasn't aware that Jacque wasn't sitting there with you, but I can certainly talk with her too.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. Anything else on this one right now? I have some questions, but I don't want to get ahead of where the conversation is on that.

So, for example, in NAGE's original letter, you ask—well, I'll find it. Consider moving—I'm looking at the first paragraph, consider moving—it looks to me like you're saying

the entire, you know, call it a wage area," but I think you are saying move the Shawnee County wage area into the Kansas City wage area. And I want to find out if that is, in fact, what you're asking us to consider. Is it that the entire Topeka wage area be moved into Kansas City, or is it that some portion of it should be moved—you don't have to answer right now, but this is a question I have—what is it that you are proposing here?

MR. SHORE: The original request for consideration was moving the entire wage area. One of the reasons the follow-up questions that I submitted and that were answered by OPM was to consider the effect of pulling, you know, Topeka itself out of the wage area. So while our original request was to move the entire wage area, which would match the GS move, I would think, right, in January, the change that occurred there, I did ask for more information on the possibility of what would occur if you left the rest of the wage area and only moved out, I guess, Shawnee County.

MR. DAVEY: If I may, I am reading the original letter from March 9th a little differently than you are, Mr. Friedman, and it says consider moving Shawnee County wage area into Kansas wage area.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Kansas City, yeah.

MR. DAVEY: When I see Shawnee County, I'm thinking just one county. There is no such thing as Shawnee County wage area, as far as I know.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Right. That's correct. That's why I was—

MR. DAVEY: So it appeared to me in the original request, it was move one county out of that metropolitan statistical area over to the Kansas City area.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Well, I'm trying to get clarification—

MR. DAVEY: Okay.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: —on what NAGE is proposing, and maybe they need to think about it some more. And then I also had some questions about 612-MGT-1. I know it is ancient history at this point, but the document states that the definition of the current Topeka wage area goes all the way back to 1972 and the origin of the Federal Wage System. I am wondering if there exists anything by way of record of the discussion that took place at that time. Was it a consensus recommendation of labor and management at that time to establish a Topeka wage area with the current boundaries, or was anything else considered? If that's something for which we have no records, fine, but if we do have them, then I would like to see them.

MR. ALLEN: Mr. Chairman, we can take a look through our records and see if the Topeka wage area has been discussed at FPRAC in the past and to see what—if there were any discussions of the wage area separately, then we'll share that information with the Committee.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: And the other thing it seemed to me would be useful to know is—according to 614-OPM-1, there would no longer be enough data to conduct a wage survey for the Topeka wage area if Shawnee County were to be moved out of the wage area. So if that were to happen, where would the other counties of the Topeka wage area be reassigned?

MR. SHORE: Pulling out just Shawnee?

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: What does it say in 611-NAGE-1? Yes, Shawnee County.

So then my question is: where would the other counties in the Topeka wage area go, based on application of the regulatory criteria? With that, unless there's any other discussion, we could move some of this to the working group or all of it—or continue the discussion in here, at our next meeting. Can we reach a conclusion on that? I guess you want to ponder that.

MR. SHORE: Yeah. If we could just wait till next meeting.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay.

All right. So then can we carry on with a few more items this morning, if people are willing to do that? I think we could dispose of a few things.

MR. ALLEN: Hopefully, these should be pretty short, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Yeah. So the next thing up is item (b) under Old Business, definition of Lane County, Oregon, to a non-appropriated fund Federal Wage System wage area. We also have a new document on that, which is 614-OPM-2, additional information on Lane County, in response to Jacque's request at the last meeting that we also look at the Sacramento wage area as a possible destination for Lane County.

So can we turn our attention to that one? Mark, summarize that new document for us, please.

MR. ALLEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

At our last meeting, we had introduced a recommendation to define Lane County to the Pierce, Washington, wage area. This would actually have no effect on employees because the two employees in Lane County are currently paid from that wage schedule. There's a VA canteen service location in Lane County.

We were asked to take a look at the geographic distance between Lane County and Sacramento as well, and at the last meeting, what I was able to do was kind of eyeball my road atlas and say that I thought maybe 500 miles between Lane County and Sacramento. That's the reason we did not include that in the analysis. It's actually 477 miles from Lane County to Sacramento, compared to 239 miles to the Pierce, Washington, wage area.

So, given that non-appropriated fund wage areas are primarily defined based on

proximity, the Management recommendation to define Lane County to the Pierce, Washington, wage area still stands.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Any questions or discussion on that? Jacque, are you still on the phone?

MS. SIMON: [via phone] I am, but I'm unfortunately driving, and so I can't really examine the document right now. So I will have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: So we are not ready to make a decision on this one, then?

MR. ALLEN: It seems we are not.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Is that the case?

Okay. Well, let's definitely, please, get to it next month. Okay.

Well, if you're driving, Jacque, we have three other New Business items, all relating to assigning counties to NAF wage areas. Is Labor able to make decisions on that now? If not, there's probably no point in continuing this morning. It would be nice if we could get it done, though. What do you think?

MR. ALLEN: I would say that driving and reviewing wage areas is probably more hazardous than driving and playing Pokémon Go.

[Laughter.]

MR. ERWIN: I would be okay to table this until the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Does it cause any heartburn on the Management side if we defer that? Other than Jim Brady. He doesn't really have a vote, so—

[Laughter.]

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: All right. We will defer these till our next meeting, then.

I do have a question. I counted four NAF wage areas in Eastern North Carolina. Is my math right on that? I'm just wondering. How many NAF workers are there in Eastern North Carolina?

MR. ALLEN: I think it has to do with the number of military installations that are there and the number of NAF employees who are stationed at those bases.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: It just struck me that wages probably are not very different in these four areas. I'm just curious, for whatever it's worth, why we need four NAF wage areas in Eastern North Carolina.

MR. ALLEN: Yeah. What it actually speaks to is that the non-appropriated fund areas are defined differently than the appropriated fund areas, with the law requiring that the non-appropriated fund areas have to be defined locally. So that's why we have individual county area definitions in some cases.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Okay. So we're going to defer these other New Business items. Does anyone have any other New Business item that's not listed on our agenda?

Is somebody speaking on the phone?

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] This is Victor Zimmerman with the Topeka VA.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] There's actually something that's not—[audio break]—regards to taking it from that—[audio break]—into Topeka, Kansas, and—[audio break]—

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: I'm afraid you're breaking up, Mr. Zimmerman.

MR. SHORE: Mr. Zimmerman, rather than—since you're cutting in and out, maybe you can I can speak off of this call, and you can relay whatever information you are trying to relate to me, and at next month's meeting, I can either present it then or put something in writing and share it with everybody to be added to the agenda.

MR. ZIMMERMAN: [via phone] Okay. I can do that.

MR. SHORE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: So thank you again, Mr. Zimmerman.

Well, if there is no further business, it would be in order for us to adjourn. Is there any objection?

MR. DAVEY: Motion to adjourn.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: All right. Then, second?

MR. ERWIN: Second.

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Second. Any objection to that motion?

[No audible response.]

CHAIRMAN FRIEDMAN: Hearing none, see you all in August. Have an enjoyable month between now and then.