**STATE OF NEVADA**

**MERIT AWARD BOARD**

**March 13, 2013 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Blasdel Building, 209 E. Musser Street,**

**1st Floor, Room 105**

**Carson City, Nevada 89701**

**And**

**Grant Sawyer State Building**

**555 East Washington Avenue**

**Room 5100**

**Las Vegas, Nevada 89101**

**The sites will be connected by videoconference. The public is invited to attend at either location.**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Merit Award Board**

**Members**

**Present:** Angelica Gonzalez – Secretary

Lesley Henrie – Treasurer

Sonia Joya – Chairperson

Neil Lake – Representative, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Harry Schiffman – Representative, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

1. **CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Sonia Joya** - Called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
2. **GENERAL BUSINESS**
3. **Review of Suggestions Log**

**Chairperson Joya:** Remarked that the response to the Log had been excellent. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Noted that they had recently received 19 more with a total of 76. She said that many of the suggestions were without merit which meant that employees had suggested changing a procedure that was tied to a regulation. She stated that the suggestion from the Museums and History Division might have some merit. She explained that they needed to have a discussion as to how to respond to the employee. The administrator had supported the suggestion but their division was required to utilize a specific vendor until the expiration of an existing contract. She continued that it would have to be considered carefully as there were other agencies utilizing the same vendor. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated that there had been some discussion about this suggestion but noted that she did not want the Merit Award Board to become involved in determining these types of decisions for agencies, this was their issue. The Board would identify the merit of the award and then the agency or agencies would determine the funding otherwise she stated it would become too complicated dealing with individual agencies. She said the Merit Award Board would have to develop a system in which they would advise the agency that they would require a figure, a cost-saving figure. She stated that if any employee made a suggestion that affected multiple agencies that was excellent, however the Merit Award Board would not be the party to determine the funding that would be saved.

1. **Board Response to Mr. de Witt (Museums and History Division) Submission**

**Angelica Gonzalez**: Asked what was recommended in the way of a response. **Chairperson Joya**: Responded it needed to be returned to Mr. Barton in the Museums and History Division so that the division could determine a cost and similar correspondence could be sent to other affected agencies. She acknowledged that this was something the employee could not do and she indicated that she would draft a letter which the whole Board could review. She continued that the content of the letter would state in effect that the board recognized that there was a contract however there were areas of cost-saving available which the board would like the division to identify and then evaluate a cost-savings for the employee so an award could be determined, if applicable. **Lesley Henrie**: Noted that the process could take a while but they would still be proceeding with it. **Chairperson Joya**: Acknowledged that this was the case. She said that this would involve a process of educating the agencies as to the role of the Merit Award Board and their responsibilities. She stated that it was the opinion of all board members that it was important that state employees receive as much of a benefit as possible and they would emphasize that point in the letter.

1. **Examine and Discuss Ideas for Promoting Awards to State Employees**

**Chairperson Joya**: Asked if other board members had any ideas. **Lesley Henrie**: Indicated that she wanted to review the current position of the board with regard to several ideas that she had been involved in to date. She said the primary communication that had gone out to state employees was a statewide email which reached about 85% of state employees in the executive branch. She noted that about 85% of employees had an email account and of that number approximately 10% did not access their accounts regularly. She said the content of the email was in the form of an announcement indicating that the program had changed and advising employees that they could obtain awards up to $25,000. The email included a poster that could be printed and posted in common areas. She said that resulted in a large number of employees submitting ideas. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Confirmed that was correct and within the first week of the email going out she had received approximately 40 responses so there was a substantial impact. She thought that many employees thought it was a contest with a specific timeframe. She explained that for employees who asked questions she had described the program and stated they had plenty of time to consider suggestions.

**Chairperson Joya**: Asked Lesley Henrie what number of employees that the 85% represented**. Lesley** **Henrie**: Responded that would be approximately 16,500 employees in the executive branch, and on the state email system it would be 11,500 in that area alone so in total about 13,500 employees. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated that from about 13,500 employees they had received 40 suggestions. She asked how the remaining 15% could be reached. **Lesley Henrie**: Responded that on any communication effort repetition was important and utilizing different methods was also important. She said that they had basically sent out one communication and indicated that it would not be beneficial to stop at that. She thought assembling a more comprehensive campaign would be beneficial. She added that this would require some thought to put together and a communications plan would be a good first step and it would document the things that could be done within a reasonable amount of effort and time. **A Member**: Indicated that the plan should ensure that communications reached employees like groundskeepers, employees who would not necessarily use email regularly or might not even have access to a computer. He continued that ensuring the supervisors of such employees received this information would also help. **Lesley Henrie**: Responded that that was a good point as their communication had gone out to the executive branch but not NSHE (Nevada System of Higher Education). She continued if the employees of NSHE were folded into the executive branch that was an additional 24,000 employees.

**Chairperson Joya**: Agreed that the board needed to come up with a communication plan. She asked Lesley Henrie as this was specifically her area, if they could prepare a one-page outline together. She suggested that a certain type of repetition be incorporated into the outline and suggested it could be put into effect four times a year. She expressed a concern that it should reach all groups. She said that as part of that plan and as part of an outreach program, if someone was needed to speak to supervisors once a month she would be happy to do that. She said perhaps a one-page talking point sheet which could be a 15-minute presentation. **Lesley Henrie**: Agreed with this and acknowledged that although email was an easy method of communication other ways would have to be utilized to reach all employee groups especially those not utilizing email or computers in their day-to-day duties. **Chairperson Joya**: Confirmed that she and Lesley Henrie would work on that handout and a script so that it was uniform and all board members could do it. **A Member**: Asked if they were also including agency heads or front-line supervisors to promote the program through office memos or something similar. **Chairperson Joya**: Noted that both Mr. Schiffman and Mr. Lake were in attendance when the governor was at their meeting and he was so overwhelmed that he had a meeting with the legislators and told them to go out to their departments and agency heads to promote this. **A Member**: Stated he had suggested this as receiving a memo from a supervisor made more of an impression that just opening up an email from the state. He thought it would generate more interaction. **Lesley Henrie**: Acknowledged all the suggestions were great and illustrated the importance of a comprehensive plan, targeting first specific groups and then a more general circulation. **Chairperson Joya**: Noted that she did not want the board to get overwhelmed so they would first work on their communication plan for promotion and then as they built on that for their next meeting it would generate other ideas. **Lesley Henrie**: Asked if there was a timeframe. **Chairperson Joya**: Responded if they both worked on it they should have a draft completed by March 20, 2013 and it could then be sent out to all board members by March 21, 2013. She asked if the other board members could respond by five working days after receipt of the draft with any suggestions or input. She noted that no response by any board member would be considered approval.

1. **Examine Possible Response for Suggestions without Merit**

**Angelica Gonzalez**: Stated that she met with Lee-Ann Easton, Administrator for the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) because she needed some advice with regard to suggestions that she had received which were problematic. She noted that Ms. Easton had asked that the board develop form letters as a response to suggestions that were already in place but that their particular agency might not be utilizing. She said she had included in the board packages four examples of suggestions and wondered if board members had looked at them to be able to suggest some language so she could craft a letter responding to the issues mentioned. **Chairperson Joya**: Referred to the phrase “suggestion without merit” and asked who would make that determination, the board or the agency? **Angelica Gonzalez**: Responded that the agency would determine that. She referred board members to suggestion number two. She noted that in the suggestion the subject was energy savings and the employee worked with the Department of Corrections. This concerned lights being left on in state buildings and she was suggesting motion detectors could be used to turn lights on and off to conserve energy. The benefits were given as substantial energy and utility cost savings. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Noted that some agencies had this in place but not the Department of Corrections. She noted that Lee-Ann Easton had asked her to create a form letter that would address her suggestion and inform the employee that even though her department was not utilizing motion detectors there were other agencies that were using them. The letter would also note that funding considerations might be stopping the Department of Corrections from using them**. A Member**: Suggested that for that particular department it might also be a safety concern. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Agreed and said there could be multiple issues involved. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated this would be a simple letter for the Merit Award Board. The board would advise the state employee that the State of Nevada had already identified what they had recognized as a cost-saving measure but some agencies were not able to implement it for a variety of reasons. The letter could also indicate an appreciation of their input and in bringing it to the board’s attention and to be aware that other agencies were exercising these same cost-saving measures now. Finally the employee could be advised that it would be something that would be evaluated in the future at other levels.

**Lesley Henrie**: Asked about the board’s role in a situation where one agency had this cost-saving measure and now an employee in another agency had suggested this measure. **Chairperson Joya**: Explained that the board would have to decide whether the duplication of an idea was something that would be awarded. She stated that if the idea had already been determined to be a cost-saving measure for one agency and then another employee comes up with the same idea then it would be considered to have already been awarded**. Lesley** **Henrie**: Explained her reason for bringing this issue up. She acknowledged what Chairperson Joya had said but then continued that the employee had raised an idea that could save the Department of Corrections substantial money. If she had not brought it up they would have continued with the existing procedures. So in effect should that employee not be rewarded in some sense for bringing a situation to light? She considered this a somewhat gray area. **Chairperson Joya**: Said they would have to relate this to the idea of a patent in that it had already been determined once and therefore they could not reward an employee each time for the same idea. **A Member**: Suggested that not every office/department was the same and size and complexity of the building could affect the cost-savings involved. **Lesley Henrie**: Said that in her opinion the board was in effect stopping this employee whereas she felt the agency should state that. **A Member**: Agreed that it should be the agency who would determine whether it was cost-effective or not as a process. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated it was a good point to put it back on the directors of the agencies to say to the employee that their agency had already identified that and thanked the employee and asked that they continue to give suggestions. The directors would become part of the discussion. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Confirmed that she would send out the suggestions to the agencies whether the Merit Award Board agreed that it had merit or not so that any action would become the agencies’ responsibility. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated that it was a process of educating the agencies and this would encourage a good interaction with discussion and the promotion of ideas. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Asked if they should include in the response letter information about what agencies were currently using motion detectors so that her employer would have that information and could choose or not choose to research it and make decisions accordingly. **A Member**: Stated that the employee herself would not know what was being done within her own agency so it would be up to the Warden to inform her and look into it.

1. **Update on First Presentation in which Governor Sandoval and Board Members, Neil Lake, Harry Schiffman and Chairperson Sonia Joya were Present**

**Chairperson Joya**: Commented on how enthusiastic she felt after the first meeting of the board. She indicated that Governor Sandoval noted that he was not familiar with the Merit Award Board. She said that she had discussed with Angelica Gonzalez the possibility of Governor Sandoval being able to do the award presentations and scheduling that. She stated that the governor had visited and taken pictures with everybody and appeared very enthusiastic about the program discussing it with many state employees. She stated that Governor Sandoval had indicated that he would consider it an honor to be part of the process and she recommended therefore that the governor do the presentations of the merit awards.

1. **Review Department of Health and Human Services Suggestion Review Form**

**Angelica Gonzalez**: Noted that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was the department with the majority of suggestions submitted. She said that they had developed a form to assist with responses. She described their process. She said that what they had done was send in the suggestion, the memo from the Merit Award Board and the suggestion review form. She explained that the form was tied into NRS 285.050 (Nevada Revised Statutes). She said that the executive assistant of Director M. Wilden had said that every administrator responding to a suggestion must complete the form for their own internal purposes. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Said after conferring with Lee-Ann Easton she had asked her to call the DHHS to request permission to include the form for all other agencies to utilize. She confirmed that the DHHS had given permission for them to use the form. She stated that she had made some minor edits to the form and notified the board that she would be sending out the form with the employee’s suggestion to the agency for their response. **Chairperson Joya**: Confirmed that she and the other board members agreed with the decision. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Thanked them as it would make the process much easier.

1. **Schedule Next Meeting**

**Chairperson Joya**: Referred to the issue of per diem and stated she did not have a definitive answer. She noted that both Mr. Lake and Mr. Schiffman were not state employees. She stated that no members of the board were receiving per diem. **Lesley Henrie**: Noted that she had looked into the matter and said that there was no mention of it in the statute. She said that the statute made reference to $1,000 for operating expenses. She noted that she had reviewed the Nevada Board and Commission Manual and it said that in most cases board and commission members would be entitled to reimbursement for lodging, food and travel expenses incurred in connection with meetings and other legitimate business of the board or commission such as authorized investigations. She said it also stated that applicable statutes might provide a modest salary for board or commission members while engaged in official business. She said that since there was no applicable statute she thought that the sum of $1,000 was strictly related to the lodging, food and travel expenses incurred in connection with meetings and other legitimate business of the board. **Chairperson Joya**: Said she did not know how often the board received the $1,000. **Lesley Henrie**: Confirmed it was annually.

**Chairperson Joya**: Commented that she had an idea for the use of the funds. She suggested that the Merit Award Board develop an award that was exclusive to the recipients of a merit award. She noted that it could perhaps be a plaque with the state seal on it, signed by the members of the Merit Award Board. She said the name of the person could be engraved and it would essentially be a good government award. She added that the impact could be stated and appropriate language could be developed. **Lesley Henrie**: Stated also the money could be used toward mileage if they were required to travel for presentations. **A Member**: Stated it would make the recipients feel honored and it might encourage other employees in future efforts. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated that someone on the board could possibly work on the creation of the plaque and/or provide suggestions and she asked that it be included on the board’s next agenda.

**Chairperson Joya**: Asked members how often they wanted to meet in view of the number of suggestions that were being submitted. **A Member**: Suggested that the board meetings coincide with the award presentations so they would all be in attendance already. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Stated that she hoped board members agreed that if she had any questions or small issues that it was acceptable that she email them. **Chairperson Joya**: Agreed she could email any members of the board for input or directions. She stated that if Ms. Gonzalez needed a decision she should state that in her email and then hopefully they would all respond if not the quorum as decisions had to move forward.

**Chairperson Joya**: Noted that June 3, 2013 was the last day of the session so she preferred any time after that date. **Angelica Gonzalez**: Stated that they had to meet before the end of June or early July to accommodate the second and final disbursement for award recipient, Elizabeth Draser as it needed an adjustment for a lower payment due to an agency miscalculation. **Chairperson Joya**: Confirmed members were all available for the last week of June: **Angelica Gonzalez**: Noted that she would email all members with possible dates.

1. **Other Business – Protocol Relating to Media**

**Lesley Henrie**: Apologized for not including the item on the agenda. She stated that a newspaper article had come out recently with a substantial amount of information not included. She noted the reporter contacted her. She said she played the role of PIO for administration and she was unsure if she was being contacted as a board member or in that capacity. She said in her role as PIO she would have contacted the reporter and informed him of the omissions accordingly. She said as she was a board member she did not do that. She asked how this type of situation should be handled in the future and if it should be included on the next agenda. **Chairperson Joya**: Stated they needed to address it now. She said as the Merit Award Board would continue to have an increased profile and had specific interests from the governor that Governor Sandoval should respond to Merit Award Board specific questions. She confirmed that the protocol should be that if the board was contacted by the press about an award he should respond and provide the information required. She said if the questions were specific to policies or the statutes of the board and then the PIO would be the spokesperson providing any details. She noted that it was important the governor respond as they wanted him to promote and elevate the visibility of the Merit Award Board. She confirmed that she was in agreement with Ms. Henrie being the spokesperson for the Merit Award Board.

1. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES FOR JANUARY 17, 2013 Action Item**

**A Member moved to approve the Minutes of January 17, 2013. Angelica Gonzalez seconded the Motion. Motion Carried.**

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT –** (Note: No vote or action may be taken upon a matter raised during public comment until the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an item upon which action may be taken. Comments will be limited to five minutes per person and persons making comment will be asked to begin by stating their names for the record.)

**Chairperson Joya**: Noted there was no public comment.

1. **ADJOURNMENT Action Item**

Angelica Gonzalez indicated that they would now move on to adjournment.

**Chairperson Joya moved to adjourn the meeting. A Member seconded theMotion. Motion Carried.**