

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution  
Retirement Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
May 1, 2008

**I. Attendees**

Susan Avery, President and Director, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Retirement Task Force Members present:**

Susan Avery, co-Chair	Mark Kurz
Carolyn Bunker, co-Chair	Steve Molyneaux
Mike Brennan	Delia Oppo
Rick Chandler	Emily Schorer
Ernie Charette	John Sinibaldi
Ed Dow	June Sullivan
Karl Helfrich	Kevin Thompson

**Watson Wyatt:**

Charlie Commander  
Mark Rich

**Guests:**

Judy McDowell  
Andy Solow

**II. Update on Meeting of the Retirement Trust Committee**

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, Carolyn Bunker, Charlie Commander, and Mark Rich met with the trustee's Retirement Trust Committee in New York to educate new members of this committee on the Institution's Retirement Plan (the "Plan" hereafter). The Retirement Trust Committee is the group responsible for overseeing investments associated with the funding of the Plan. Members are Nancy Newcomb, Bob Ducommon, Rod Berens, and Joe Patton. Other trustees who were in attendance were Newt Merrill, Chairman of the Board; Joe Roxe, Treasurer; and Ted Dengler, Chair of the Retirement Fund Committee.

Charlie and Carolyn reported that it was a very productive meeting and that all of the trustees in attendance understood the complexity of the current plan and the associated challenges. They were all engaged in the discussion and appreciated the scope of the issues we are dealing with.

When it was questioned why it was necessary to discuss the challenges associated with the current plan design with this particular group of trustees (since their focus is on investments), Dr. Avery pointed out that all trustees will be involved in any decision regarding the Plan. This was an opportunity to engage yet another group of trustees in the process. It is imperative to educate the Board so that they can make informed decisions.

Another follow-up meeting with this group has been scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **III. May 21<sup>st</sup> Open Institution Meetings**

There was a review of the proposed slides that will be used for the open Institution meetings scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup>. Topics to be covered include:

- High level FAQs (e.g. why are we here again?)
- Brief history of the Plan
- Impact of the Pension Protection Act
- Different contribution scenarios
- Impact to employees
- Who is responsible for making decisions
- What is the position of the trustees
- Next steps

After the slides were reviewed, Dr. Avery asked for feedback on the presentation and whether or not the RTF felt that it will reach out far enough into the community.

There was some discussion about how much time we should spend on historical information and issues versus focusing on where we are now and how we intend to move forward. Some felt that it was important that the WHOI community be able to access historical information so that they could understand the Plan better. A recommendation was made to point out resources for employees who want to learn more about the history of the Plan (e.g. website, HR, etc.), but to stay focused on the current issues and moving forward. It was also suggested that we dedicate ample time to educating the community on the differences between defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) plans. In addition, it is imperative to stress the fact that employees will not lose the benefit that they have already earned under the Plan.

Other suggestions:

1. Include the ‘guiding principles’ into the presentation (employees will want to know what the basic assumptions are).
2. Let employees know how they can express their views.
3. Have the staff make the presentation versus Watson Wyatt.
4. Invite members of the Retirement Fund Committee (Ted Dengler, etc.)
5. Address the following employee concerns that we know of:
  - a. Lack of interaction between the RTF and trustees
  - b. Whether or not this is really a ‘cost saving’ issue for WHOI (point out that we’re not reviewing the Plan again because of cost, but due to increased volatility)
6. Be open and honest about some of the obstacles, problems, and frustrations the RTF has experienced, *but* also outline how these are being addressed and the plan for moving forward (e.g. creation of the Executive Group, more interaction with the trustees, better communication plans, timeline).
7. Clearly show the responsibilities of all parties involved “from this point forward” (RTF, trustees, administration) and the decision framework.

#### **IV. Other Business**

A question was raised that if we have reconvened to address the increased volatility that now exists due to new rules laid out in the Pension Protection Act, is there any way we can work with lawmakers to try and get the rules changed? Carolyn Bunker responded that we have tried. We've been unsuccessful so far, but are still trying. Mark Rich added that there are other groups, outside of WHOI, working on that same issue.

There was some discussion regarding a potential retreat of the RTF and the Retirement Fund Committee. However, if there is going to be a retreat, objectives have to be clearly defined first. This needs to be discussed further.

It was also pointed out that it would be more productive if we set a goal for coming up with a decision on whether or not changes needed to be made with the Plan. Based on feedback from Watson Wyatt, there was general agreement that setting a goal for the end of the year, 2008, was reasonable.

#### **V. Action Items**

- Watson Wyatt will update the slides based on recommendations;
- Carolyn Bunker and/or Susan Avery will invite members of the Retirement Fund Committee to the 5/21 presentations;
- Carolyn Bunker and Susan Avery will identify members of the Executive Group.
- Identify those folks who will make the 5/21 presentations.
- Open Institution Meeting on 5/21: Carriage House at 10:00 a.m. and Redfield at 2:00 p.m.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

Carolyn Bunker adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Emily Schorer

Minutes approved by: Dr. Susan Avery and Carolyn Bunker