



May 12, 2008

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Dear Jim:

Below you will find the Postal Service's response to the questions posed by the union concerning the Human Capital Enterprise System (HCES), Human Resources Shared Services at Headquarters (HRSS), and the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC). These questions have been discussed at length in a meeting attended by American Postal Workers Union (APWU) representatives, U.S. Postal Service program personnel, and Patrick Devine, of my staff, on January 29th. Follow-up questions have been received at various times since that meeting by means of email from Mike Morris, of the APWU.

The phraseology and assumptions contained in the APWU's questions are solely that of the APWU and by responding to the questions the Postal Service is in no way indicating an acknowledgement or agreement of the truth of the matter asserted in the APWU's question.

**1) HRSSC is currently counting successful applications for best-qualified duty assignments under Article 37.3.A.7.b and c, as successful bids pursuant to Article 12.3.A. When will this situation be addressed?**

Response: The USPS agrees that while bids for "best-qualified" bids, pursuant to Article 37.3.A.7.a, do count as successful bids under Article 12.3.A; "best-qualified" applications under Article 37.3.A.b and c, do not count as successful bids. If the union can demonstrate that any applications were incorrectly counted as bids in the past, it will be investigated by HRSSC.

**2) In St. Paul, MN, web-bidding does not match the manual bid sheet specifically on retail duty assignments with rotating days off. For example, in the most recent posting, web-bidding had a 6-week rotation listed, and the manual bid sheet for the same duty assignment had a 4-week rotation. How and when will this be addressed? Until the fix is made, can something be put on the web instructing prospective bidders on duty assignments with rotating days off to refer the manual bid sheet for the proper rotation?**

Response: This is currently being corrected by the utilization of a System Change Request (SCR). If the SCR cannot be accomplished in a timely manner, an appropriate warning may need to be placed on the web-site.

**3) When HRSSC cannot comply with Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) requirements on posting and bidding, what procedure is in place to make sure the local office has the option of manual posting in order to comply with the LMOU?**

Response: District HR Local Services is responsible to review LMOUs, and, therefore, determine whether the current JBM automated process satisfies the mandates of the unique provisions of the LMOU. If it is determined that the current process does not meet the mandates of the LMOU, all postings can be accomplished locally through a non-automated or manual process.

- 4) **It is the position of the APWU that the results of a posting are effective on the effective date of the award notice, and not on the closing date of the posting period, does HRSSC agree?**

Response: The Postal Service's position is that the results of a posting are effective on the effective date stated on the award notice, and not on the closing date of the posting period.

- 5) **HRSSC was placing unsuccessful bidders who attempt and fail to qualify on schemes on 37.3.F.7 duty assignments under a 37.3 F.3.b absolute 90-day bidding restriction instead of a 37.3.F.7.b 180-day bidding restriction to the same position. When will that be corrected and will it be automatically done retroactively?**

Response: JCIM Article 37, Question 195 makes clear the application of the 37.3.F.7.b 180-day bidding restriction. Therefore, a clerk who fails the scheme requirement on an SSSA duty assignment is restricted from bidding for 180 days on other SSSA duty assignments ONLY.

- 6) **HRSSC does not, in some offices, put the pay location in the comment section or elsewhere, even when requested to do so by local services, while it is putting pay locations in the comment sections and other areas in other offices. When will all offices be allowed to include pay location on bid notices when requested by local services?**

Response: As discussed, there is no contractual requirement to include pay location on bid notices. HRSSC will not include pay location on bid notices. The HRSSC is monitoring postings to ensure uniformity across all crafts and bid clusters.

- 7) **In Sarasota, FL, PTR Clerk R. S., as a result of a bid was supposed to be promoted to FTR, effective July 21, 2007. As late as November 30, 2007, this still has not occurred despite numerous requests from local services to HRSSC. When will this change be made, and made retroactive? Is this indicative of a larger problem?**

Response: The problem in this instance was the result of local services not completing the appropriate paperwork, Form RAR-200, Authorization to Convert to Full-time. This form currently needs to be completed to convert a PTR to FTR even when this is accomplished through bidding. As a result of this instance, the process has been further reviewed. If the PTR to FTR placement is a result of automated bidding no worksheet is necessary – it would be processed in the awarding of the automated posting. If the PTR to FTR placement was a result of a manual posting, the JB1200 would be the appropriate worksheet submitted for HRSSC processing.

- 8) **What can be done to increase the font-size of seniority lists and bid postings?**

Response: HRSSC has submitted an SCR to increase the font-size on bid postings and they will submit another SCR to increase the font-size of seniority lists.

- 9) **Web-bidding is confusing to some, as it relates to non-scheduled days for employees bidding at home without benefit of a copy of the posting. Saturday/Sunday is listed with 1-7 off days. Sunday/Monday is listed with 1-2 off days. This calendar obviously begins with Sunday as the first day of the week, while postal weeks begin on Saturday. What can be done to make the posting less confusing?**

Response: HRSS is investigating to determine the cause of this problem which occurs, to the best of our knowledge, only on Tour 1 duty assignments. Once the source of the problem is identified, an appropriate SCR can be submitted.

- 10) **What can be done to accommodate the problem created when postings are not made in a timely manner?**

Response: Accommodations are done on a case-by-case basis..

- 11) **Why is the term "swing-shift" used in bid-posting when no one in the USPS uses the term?**

Response: An SCR will be submitted to eliminate the use of "swing-shift", "day-shift" and "evening-shift", and provide the appropriate tour information.

- 12) **Do PTR schedules have to be in whole-hour increments?**

Response: TACS requires that weekly hours for PTRs must be in whole hour increments.

- 13) **What are the appropriate procedures and timelines for awarding bids to employees on temporary light or limited-duty who require medical certification?**

Response: Local Services has been instructed that they should be following the same procedures for notifying employees on temporary light or limited-duty regarding documentation requirements for bidding, as was in place under the HRIS system, to ensure timely notification. Local Services is also responsible for timely notification to HRSSC, so that the successful bidder can be named.

- 14) **Some installation duty assignments are being posted with the hours and days off, as simply "V" for variable, contrary to the language concerning posting in Article 37.3.E. What steps in HRSS taking to address this issue?**

Response: HRSS will research an appropriate solution to simplify the display of variable schedules on postings.

- 15) **HRSS is denying bids for employees who are on their probationary period. There is no provision to deny bids in Article 37 for probationary employees. When will this be corrected?**

Response: The Postal Service response is forthcoming under separate cover.

- 16) **Is it possible to make corrections to existing bid-postings without the bids being reposted? As an example, a local union notices the tour or PAA is listed incorrectly. Both sides agree locally to remedy the problem, but the union is not requesting the duty assignment be reposted. If it is corrected locally, how can we be sure that when that job is vacated it will not be reposted incorrectly in the future?**

Response: There is currently no process in place under which the job posting could be corrected in HCES by HRSSC without reposting the duty assignment in the next bid cycle. In the current process District HR Local Services would have to make the correction whenever the duty assignment is subsequently vacated and listed on the subsequent vacancy report. District HR Local Services must make every effort at the time of the vacancy report review to ensure all changes are identified, and eliminate the need to repost or make corrections to positions once posted. HRSS may explore whether a SCR could be used to provide an opportunity to make locally, agreed-upon, minor corrections to duty assignments subsequent to the actual posting.

**17) There seems to be a data-entry error problem by listing the improper tour on duty assignment postings. How can this be corrected?**

Response: District HR Local Services is responsible for properly identifying the tour on all job postings. In the specific instances reviewed, it appears that the vacant duty assignments were moved to a different tour before being posted, but that the posting, itself, was not properly corrected by the bid cluster.

**18) In the past, employees were able to get retirement estimates as far as three (3) years prior to eligibility. When are estimates available?**

Response: Employees actually are now able to get retirement estimates as far as five (5) years prior to eligibility. Some confusion may have arisen, in that, employees in the past have been "advised" by HRSS personnel that these estimates would be much more helpful as employees approach the 90-day window before their planned retirement date.

**19) There are occasions where an individual cannot contact HRSS, due to incapacity or death. When issues arise regarding life insurance, health coverage, etc.; the union or family contacts HRSS, and provides the EID, assuming we even know it; however, HRSS does not proceed with the matter. What system is in place to facilitate interaction with HRSS when employees are either incapacitated or deceased?**

Response: Family members or union representatives who contact HRSSC regarding life insurance, health coverage, retirement questions, etc., on behalf of disabled or deceased employees should currently be referred to the Bereavement Team. Appropriate safeguards or protocol will be developed to protect the privacy of individuals while allowing appropriate representatives access to necessary information. Information and forms for filing claims will be provided to current/former family members upon request. No specific information regarding amounts of insurance or other benefits or eligibility to file a claim is given to callers.

**20) There appears to be problems with timely processing of personnel changes by HRSS. At our last meeting we were told the changes would be processed within two or three working days. That is not occurring. In Minneapolis, an individual retired August 3, 2007, and that is still not being reflected in the bulletins from HRSS. What is the timeline?**

Response: The goal is to process personnel changes within two to three days after appropriate paperwork is submitted by Local Services. In the specific instance cited, HRSSC indicates that records show this occurred but that Local Services may not have posted a notice of the retirement action.

Due to the instance cited, the HRSSC is investigating the accuracy of the current distributed report to capture all actions processed in a pay period regardless of the effective date.

- 21) Has the HRSS software been changed to reflect the August 16, 2007 MOU that requires the selection of withheld residual duty assignments by clerks impacted (even if they are volunteers in lieu of impacted clerks) by Article 12 to be combined into a single group or pool, by status, regardless of pay level?**

Response: Appropriate SCRs for all 2006 National Agreement changes have been accomplished. HRSS will research to determine whether an appropriate SCR for the August 16, 2007, MOU has been accomplished. In the meantime, Local Services will monitor to assure compliance.

- 22) In the Q&A from our previous meeting, HRSS agreed in Q&A # 30 that until the problem could be corrected for the long term, Local Services would put uniform allowance information in the comments section of bid notices. As of January 15, of this year, HRSS is refusing to permit local services to do this. How will this situation be corrected?**

Response: HRSSC does not include clothing allowance in job comment area. The HRSSC continues to receive requests from bid cluster management to add a clothing allowance to positions that do not qualify for a clothing allowance.

- 23) Previously we have been told that union access to OPFs would be through the district offices. Currently union officials in Long Island, NY, are being told they do not have access to OPFs. What is the correct procedure for the union or an employee to gain access to employee OPFs?**

Response: The USPS is currently reviewing the Employer's contractual obligations with regard to electronic OPF access, and will further review with the APWU's Industrial Relations department.

- 24) Union officers need access to review (and not just copy) employee's OPFs. How is that going to be accomplished when HRSS is completely on line with all OPFs being scanned?**

Response: The USPS is currently reviewing the Employer's contractual obligations with regard to Electronic OPF access and will review with APWU Industrial Relations.

- 25) Who is doing the scanning work of OPFs and what measures are in place to check the quality of that scanning?**

Response: This work has been contracted to a professional scanning company in Dallas, Texas. The Postal Inspection Service is monitoring security and the Postal Service is closely monitoring the quality of the service being provided.

- 26) Has the HRSS bidding software been adjusted to accommodate the contractual requirement that when any clerk holds retreat rights to a craft or installation, those retreat rights serve as a bid on initial vacancies in the same level from which they were reassigned, and as a bid on all residual vacancies in other levels for which they expressed a desire to retreat?**

Response: Local Services is currently maintaining these records, as before, and is responsible for assuring that the bids of clerks with retreat rights for initial vacancies in the losing installation are properly considered. HRSS is exploring a long term fix in the software. (This will require more than a simple SCR.)

- 27) Under the HRIS system, various reports were available to the union such as the HR083 report which gave the employee's name, assignment, skills, and schedule. We are told this report is no longer available. What personnel reports are available from HRSS?**

Response: HRSS will provide APWU with a listing of all reports currently available under the new HRSS job bidding system.

- 28) When clerks use phone bidding, there is a prompt to enter the bid number with the following message: "for example, if this is your 10<sup>th</sup> choice, enter 010". This can be confusing; a better prompt message would be "if this is your first choice, enter 001". Can this change be made?**

Response: HRSS is aware of this problem, which is a carryover from the old phone bidding system. An appropriate SCR will be submitted to correct this ambiguity.

- 29) When clerks use phone bidding and they enter their choice as being their 050<sup>th</sup> choice, even though they only bid one time, the system accepts it as their 50<sup>th</sup> choice. There should be a prompt that ensures the number of bids is at least equal to the choice expressed. Can this problem be corrected?**

Response: This would require an additional SCR. HRSS will evaluate the feasibility of such a correction to the system.

- 30) The on-line process for employees to change their address is not working. When will this be corrected?**

Response: While this is not actually an HRSSC issue, HRSS will contact the appropriate process owner to investigate whether this problem has been corrected and respond accordingly.

- 31) Does the Employer agree that clerk craft employees are only required to submit written notification of their desire to remain a "live bidder" on previous bids within ten (10) days after designation as a "successful bidder" on a subsequent bid? We have been advised that HRSSC is telling Local Services that the "live bidder" notice must be submitted when the employee is designated as a "senior bidder" on a subsequent bid, even though they cannot yet be designated as "successful."**

Response: Article 37.3.F.8.a requires that employees must submit written notification of their desire to remain a "live bidder" on previous bids within ten (10) days after being designated as a "successful bidder" on a subsequent bid. The HRSSC has distributed a reminder to all JBM processors that live bid requests may be submitted by "successful bidders" only.

- 32) A clerk craft employee bids on two (2) duty assignments on the current job posting. His first choice includes a typing requirement. At the close of the posting, the employee is #2 on his first choice and senior on his 2nd choice, for which he is fully qualified. After bidding closes, but before the award notice is posted, the clerk qualifies on the typing test and the senior bidder fails. Does the Employer agree that the employee is awarded his first choice, since he is now the fully qualified senior bidder on both jobs?**

Response: Yes.

- 33) Does the Employer agree that an employee is not required, under Article 37.3.F.8.a, to submit a "live letter" to remain live on previous bids until the Award Notice designating him/her as the successful bidder on a subsequent bid is posted?**

Response: The Postal Service's position is that the employee is "designated" Article 37.3.F.8 as a successful bidder when the Award Notice is posted.

- 34) Based upon part A.1 of a USPS Qualification and Skills Training Form JB-1400, local unions are being told that when it is necessary for a bidder to demonstrate a skill such as typing, the employee is responsible for contacting the PEDC within ten (10) days or they forfeit the duty assignment. Long standing past practice has been that the USPS has contacted the employee to schedule the testing. Is this being done at the insistence of HRSS or is this just a local issue that should be resolved based on local circumstances?**

Response: The process of demonstrating required skills is handled at the discretion of the local district. The JB1400 is simply the tool by which the district communicates results to the HRSSC.

Sincerely,



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