

Pacific County
Interview of Joyce

Date: December 3, 2024

Time: 1:00pm-2:00pm

Interviewers: Stephanie Sullivan, Special Investigations Program Manager, and Beau Villarreal, Assistant Audit Manager

Place: via Teams Meeting

Introductory information and questions:

- Thank you for meeting with us today. My name is Stephanie Sullivan and with me is Beau Villarreal. We will both be asking some questions and taking notes.
 - The State Auditor's Office is a reporting agency, not an enforcement agency. We perform several different types of audits at a variety of government agencies across the State of Washington. The State Auditor's Office is performing a review of payroll at Pacific County and we have a few questions about the process and specific transactions.
 - I want to make sure you are aware of the following:
 - You are not required to discuss any information related to this audit with us; however, we consider your input valuable and it will assist us in making recommendations to the City.
 - If you would like to end the meeting at any time, you may do so. Also, if you want to take a short break from the interview, just let us know.
1. Do you understand what I have explained to you?
Yes.
 2. Are you willing to proceed?
Yes.

General Questions:

1. How long did you for the County?
Joyce stated she took office as County Auditor in 1/1/2015, and left office on 3/31/2023. Stephanie followed up asking about whether she held any other positions. Joyce responded that she worked at the County for over 30 years. Joyce stated she started at the Sheriff's Office in dispatch as shift work, then started working in North District Court as a part time job. Joyce stated she then went to the Assessor's Office on a temporary job for around a year and a half, then she was hired at the County Auditor's Office for the remainder of her time until she became the Auditor.
2. What was your position title?
Answered in question above, so this question was skipped.
3. Can you please briefly explain to us what your primary responsibilities were at the County?

4. Were you involved with the County's payroll processing? Can you walk us through that?
- Joyce stated Alex Gerow, the current County Auditor was the County's payroll person in the County Auditor's Office. Rachel Patrick was the Chief Accountant. Joyce stated they pretty much handled payroll.

Stephanie followed up to ask Joyce if she was involved in the payroll process at all. Joyce responded that for her involvement, Alex would usually give Joyce the leave balance sheets at the payroll time so that Joyce could check against her calendar to ensure the vacation and sick leave hours matched up. If Joyce noted a problem, she would bring this to Alex and let her know.

- b. Who was responsible for approving the payroll disbursements?

Stephanie asked who would be responsible for approving payroll. Joyce responded she would, but she wouldn't always see it if Alex didn't give it to her before payroll. Joyce said she guesses in those cases, Alex and Rachel would do it [approve it].

Stephanie asked whether employees were submitting timesheets. Joyce responded the Auditor's Office was doing timesheets, then thought about it and stated they weren't doing timesheets and instead were doing payroll online. Joyce stated she wasn't sure which offices did manual payroll, and which did online timesheets instead. Joyce stated she thinks at the end, all Departments were entering their hours online. She stated that over her time there, there had been a transition for paper to digital for payroll.

Stephanie clarified that it sounds like between Alex and Rachel, they are handling the day-to-day payroll processing of payroll, making sure employee's hours are entered, ensuring their compensation for the month is getting calculated properly. Stephanie asked if that was Joyce's understanding? Joyce responded yes.

- c. Who's employee timesheets were you responsible for reviewing and approving?

Stephanie asked if Alex and Rachel would have a timesheet. Joyce said yes.

Stephanie asked if they would fill that out themselves and then asked if they would turn it into Joyce for her review and approval. Joyce stated what she got was a printout for their whole office with all of their employees. Joyce stated it was usually around 2 pages that had everyone's information, how much vacation and sick leave they had used, and what their balances were.

Stephanie asked whether looking over that report was Joyce's review and approval part. Joyce said yes. Joyce stated she wasn't sure if the dollar amounts are right since she didn't know how to calculate those at all, but that was more of Alex and Rachel's responsibility. Joyce stated she was mainly checking the vacation and sick leave added up to what she expected.

5. How was vacation and sick leave handled?

- a. Who was responsible for approving?

See paragraph below.

- b. Who was responsible for ensuring leave balances were accurate and leave taken was deducted?

Stephanie asked whether Joyce was keeping her own tracking of the balance and usage for vacation and sick leave, or whether that tracking was happening directly in the payroll system. Joyce stated that was part of the payroll system. Joyce stated they would give it to her. Joyce gave an example – If Alex had used 8 hours of vacation, the previous months report she would have had would have said she had maybe 24 hours, so this month's report would say she had 16 left. Joyce in this case would expect that she had received a vacation request form for the 8 hours. Joyce stated she didn't always get these because if someone called in sick or something like that, there might not be a slip, but Joyce would keep track on a small day calendar. Joyce stated she would write notes on it like so-and-so out sick 4 hours, or so-and-so out for 4 hours vacation, etc. Joyce would make sure this calendar lined up with the system report. If it didn't line up, Joyce would go to the employee (Alex in the example she gave) and talk with them and say what they submitted isn't what she tracked. Joyce and the employee would then go through and see what the employee submitted, then would get leave corrected to accurately reflect what had occurred.

6. Was anyone allowed comp time?

- a. Who?

Stephanie had asked if comp [compensation] time was allowed. Joyce asked if Stephanie was meaning if an employee worked overtime or worked on their day off. Stephanie clarified that she meant more of if you were supposed to work a 40-hour week and instead worked 50 hours, you would have 10 extra hours worked where you may be able to save that time and use it as time off at a later date instead of using vacation or sick leave. Stephanie asked if that was allowable. Joyce responded it was.

Stephanie asked who was allowed to use comp time. Joyce said anyone that used extra hours. Joyce stated mainly it was just management who included Rachel and Jolene. Joyce stated Jolene wasn't management the whole time she was there. Joyce stated elections staff also had some comp time they earned during her time there.

- b. Was there a policy for this?

Stephanie asked if there was a county policy for comp time or any type of document describing how and when this could be used. Joyce stated evidently there was. She stated she hadn't been aware of it but found out later. Joyce stated she doesn't know what was in the policy. Joyce stated she didn't handle payroll and leave, aside from verifying the numbers Alex gave her for leave. Joyce stated she didn't really know the annual contracts and supposes she should have but stated she didn't.

Stephanie asked when Joyce found out about the policy. Joyce stated she found out about the policy after Rachel left. Stephanie asked her to talk more about what she means by this. Joyce stated when Rachel left, Paul Plakinger and Marie from the Commissioner's Office – Joyce stated they were all about how she [Rachel] shouldn't have been paid for the hours she got and shouldn't have been able to cash in the hours that she got. Joyce stated Rachel's hours matched exactly what she had at the time. Joyce stated that is when she found out about the policy.

Stephanie asked Beau if he knew of a policy. Beau stated he wasn't aware of one but wasn't sure if there was something in the union contract. Stephanie asked Joyce if she was shown this policy. Joyce stated she doesn't recall seeing the policy.

c. How was this tracked and approved?

Stephanie followed up on how Joyce stated Rachel's hours matched what she had. Specifically, Stephanie asked whether Joyce had a separate tracking of the comp time Rachel was using, and Stephanie asked how Joyce felt confident in Rachel's numbers. Joyce stated the numbers she had on her reports, and the calendar for when she was gone matched up. Rachel and Jolene would send Joyce their comp hours if they had any and what they had used. Joyce stated this didn't always happen as all of them would get busy. Joyce stated she would try to get their hours from them. Joyce stated that what it came down to when Rachel left is that she was being paid out for vacation and doesn't believe there was any comp time on there. Joyce said Rachel's hours matched her hours, but they said there was a maximum in the contract for what amount of leave could be paid for. Joyce stated she hadn't been aware of this maximum.

Stephanie asked whether Rachel would have calculated her final paycheck or if someone else did. Joyce stated she didn't know. Joyce stated Alex had shifted to elections, and the Auditor's Office had hired Sheila Didion from the Sheriff's Office. Sheila was doing payroll around that time when she first came, so Rachel was spending a lot of time going over things with her, so Rachel was more involved with the review than normal. However, Joyce stated she wasn't sure for Rachel's final paycheck.

Stephanie asked if for the month Rachel left whether Joyce would have been given the payroll packet showing the cash out. Joyce said yes. Joyce stated that would have been in the end of June 2022 report, and that's the one where Joyce said Rachel's hours lined up with what she had based on the system leave report showing how many leave hours were cashed out.

Stephanie asked about her regular work schedule. Joyce said Rachel normally worked 4 10-hour days, Monday-Thursday. Joyce stated Rachel worked a lot of extra hours, which would earn her comp time. Stephanie asked to clarify that for the comp time, Rachel is essentially tracking her own earning and usage of that time but would then send an email to Joyce when she would use those hours. Joyce stated this was correct, but that she

wouldn't always get an email with this information.

Stephanie said we have a copy of one of the emails. Stephanie explained the email she was looking at was for June 2021 where there was 82 hours of comp time listed as used. Joyce stated that it should also list what the balance left was.

Stephanie said – ok, that was my question, how would you know the balance to know she actually had 82 hours left so the email should say 'I have 100 hours, and I'm using 82 hours this month' (example from Stephanie). Is this how they should read? Joyce said it would be something like that, where it might say something like 'I used 20 hours of comp time so now I have 24 left' or something like that. Stephanie asked if the next month, they said I'm using, let's say '40 hours', would your review catch that the ending balance from the prior month didn't line up with the current month. Joyce stated she would have assumed they had earned more hours during the month. Stephanie clarified that Joyce had no tracking sheet of her own where she tracked how much they earned to ensure it lined up. Joyce stated she did not.

Stephanie said when we looked at the payroll for Rachel, we found a number of instances where her email is set to say she's out of the office, and her work calendar would say she is out of the office, but when we look at the leave it wouldn't show any leave taken. So that's the piece we're trying to work through in our understanding. What was the monitoring and tracking over what she is reporting on or not reporting properly. Stephanie is giving an example – In March 2021, March 7th-March 11th, Rachel had on her calendar that she was out on vacation. She has out of office emails saying she is out of the office. When we look at the timesheet, we see no vacation time recorded so it's hard for us to know whether she should have recorded leave. Do you know? Joyce said I don't know, that's kind of an Alex and her [Rachel] thing. If she told me she had comp time and was using comp time, Joyce stated she would have believed her. Joyce's understanding is that the system didn't track comp time, it tracks vacation, but not anything other than the basic leave types like sick and vacation.

Stephanie stated that we find over the years where there is a fair amount of times where Rachel is gone for a week or 10 days where its clear on her calendar but where no leave is taken. Its has been hard to reconcile the comp time or whether vacation has been taken, so that's helpful to understand your process.

Stephanie asked if there were ever any concerns with her not getting work done or people saying we need her, but she isn't in the office. Joyce said no. Joyce said Shelly from the treasurer's office worked closely with Rachel. Joyce said they were able to work together and call each other for help when needed. Joyce stated of course if Rachel was on vacation that was different.

Stephanie asked that if Joyce knew Rachel was on a true vacation, would Joyce have expected vacation time would be used or would she have considered comp time as

allowable if she said she was going to use it. Joyce said she would have assumed it was allowable and that she wouldn't have been expected to be available while on comp time.

Stephanie said that covered what we had to go over, and asked Beau if he had any additional questions or clarifications. Beau stated that Joyce had mentioned Rachel worked 4 10-hour days per week, and asked if Joyce remembers what Rachel's start and end time to each day typically was. Joyce stated Rachel was always in earlier than she needed to be. Joyce stated when she would arrive between 7:00a.m.-7:30a.m., Rachel was always there before that. She thinks Rachel worked something like 7:30a.m. or 7:30a.m. to 3:30p.m. or something like that but Rachel usually worked longer hours.

Beau stated that for the records we were provided for comp time tracking, some of the months had emails like Joyce had referred to, but some of the other pieces we received were images of calendars showing some tracking. Beau detailed what was seen on one of the calendars. Joyce stated that the described calendar was not her calendar.

7. Can you walk us through who handled employee VEBA contributions?

Joyce stated she was not involved with this process, this was something Rachel handled.

Stephanie asked whether she reviewed any reports related to that. Joyce stated she doesn't remember reviewing anything related to VEBA.

Thank you for meeting with us. If you have any other thoughts later on, please feel free to call.