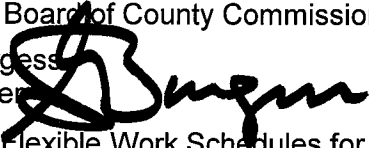


Memorandum



DATE: September 17, 2008

TO: Honorable Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

FROM: George M. Burgess
County Manager 

SUBJECT: Pilot Program: Flexible Work Schedules for County Employees

On July 1, 2008 the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution No. R-776-08 directing the Mayor to study the feasibility of establishing a pilot project to provide more flexible work schedules for County employees. Specifically, the resolution directed staff to study the potential implementation of a pilot project based on four-day workweeks (4x10), telecommuting and other flexible schedules where appropriate and advantageous. The feasibility study was intended to serve as a means of saving funds, improving services, reducing employee commuting costs and reducing traffic congestion.

A comprehensive assessment of the impact of alternate work schedules was completed including national research into workplace trends, a review of initiatives in other jurisdictions, surveys of County employees and directors, and an assessment of the potential for cost savings in County facilities. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the County develop a small-scale pilot project to be implemented in January 2009. For this pilot program, the following actions would be taken:

- Each Friday, close selected County facilities that are currently closed on weekends or are significantly scaled back on weekends. For the remainder of the workweek, these offices will operate on 10-hour days.
- For other selected operations, all employees will have the option (where feasible) to work a compressed workweek in a staggered manner that will allow services to be available five to seven days per week as currently exists. Employees on staggered four-day shifts will work 10 hours per day.

Recognizing that a number of employees will have problems adhering to this schedule, affected employees will be offered flexible start and end times (regardless of their schedule), so long as the level of services provided by their work unit is not negatively impacted.

In addition to significantly increasing employee flexibility and reducing work-related commuting costs; the program will increase customer convenience while also taking advantage of any operational savings that will accrue from closing facilities one weekday each week. However, regarding closing one weekday each week, an effective public information campaign will be needed to educate the public of the change.

Before making any large-scale permanent changes, a complete assessment of the program's effectiveness and its impact on citizens is required. I am therefore recommending implementation of a small-scale pilot program for a one-year period starting January 2009, with a review after six months. The January 2009 start date will allow the County to prepare for the transition, adjust schedules and complete the necessary discussions with our collective bargaining units for the County operations selected to participate in the pilot.

BACKGROUND

In response to the financial and economic impacts of escalating fuel prices, the condition of the economy and the impacts of property tax reforms (particularly in Florida), there is increased interest in compressed and flexible work schedules for employees. Following the adoption of Resolution R-776-08, staff was directed to gather information and conduct research to assess the impacts of compressed work schedules on the County and its employees.

Staff conducted a comparative analysis of other government jurisdictions and researched national trends, benefits and issues regarding compressed workweeks. Additionally, the Human Resources Department (HR) surveyed County employees and department directors to assess employee preferences and concerns, as well as assess opportunities for savings, productivity improvements and the impact on customer service. Staff also reviewed operations at County facilities to assess whether utility savings would be realized and the extent to which facilities could be closed one weekday in addition to weekend closings. Staff also reviewed collective bargaining agreements for contract stipulations regarding employee scheduling changes and collective bargaining requirements.

The following summarizes the findings and details the advantages, disadvantages and issues to be addressed for each alternate workweek option.

NATIONAL TRENDS

Recently, alternative workweeks in the government and not-for-profit sectors have received heightened interest and considerable media attention, particularly with the surge in gasoline prices to more than \$4 per gallon. Consequently, a comparative study of 18 city, county and state agencies that have implemented or plan to implement compressed workweeks was conducted. Results of the study are included in Attachment 1. The most notable and dramatic example of alternative schedule implementation in the public sector is the State of Utah. On August 1, 2008, the State became the first to implement a mandatory four-day workweek for approximately 17,000 of its 24,000 employees for a period of one-year. While it's too early to assess the success of Utah's pilot program, the State estimates that it will realize \$3 million in annual energy savings in 1,000 of its more than 1,200 facilities.

Utah surveyed their employees and reported that 80 percent of affected workers approved of the change, but indicated that childcare and public transportation issues would pose a significant problem for some employees. It is to be noted that the State government has no employee unions with bargaining power and was therefore able to institute the new work schedule with 30 days notice to its employees. In order to accommodate employees with childcare and transportation issues, employees are being allowed flexible start and end times (where appropriate). Also, a limited number of employees telecommute for a portion of the workday.

Most jurisdictions that have implemented compressed workweeks are smaller entities that do not provide as wide an array of services as Miami-Dade County and other large government organizations. Of the 18 jurisdictions surveyed, 14 have less than 6,000 employees. However, the study shows that regardless of size, jurisdictions face some common issues. First, the issues of child and after school care are common challenges to employees. Second, because of uncertainty of the future effectiveness of across-the-board alternative work schedules, most jurisdictions are implementing the program on a trial basis with the intent to evaluate the program after a specified period, usually three months to one year. Third, a total of nine jurisdictions surveyed have or plan to implement a four-day schedule that requires facilities close on the fifth day. The primary reason for closing one weekday is that the jurisdiction expects there will be cost savings both to the jurisdiction and employees. Other benefits include congestion and pollution reduction, expanded citizen services and increased employee morale.

In addition, for a number of reasons, jurisdictions have had to consider additional employee schedule options because no jurisdiction has been able to close all of its facilities one weekday. In one

jurisdiction, some departments rejected the notion of closing operations. In other jurisdictions, services such as fire, police, transit and human services need to operate up to seven days per week. Consequently, some jurisdictions such as the State of Ohio, Marion County (Florida) and the City of Birmingham (Alabama), offer 4x10 schedules but operate five days per week while still allowing flexible start and end times and traditional 5x8 schedules.

A number of counties have chosen to expand service hours over a five-day workweek to achieve many of the benefits of alternative work schedules while avoiding problems associated with employee childcare issues and constituent complaints. Programs in these governments feature a mix of staggered and/or alternating four-day schedules, traditional five-day schedules and flexible start and end times. Such counties include Suffolk County (New York), Howard County (Maryland), Macomb County (Michigan), and Leon County (Florida).

Florida International University, through its summer 2008 pilot program, and the cities of North Miami and Coconut Creek, recently implemented 4x10 compressed workweeks and are closed one weekday each week. However, there is limited data on the impact of these programs on government operations and/or customers. On the other hand, three large jurisdictions that piloted similar programs, El Paso County (Texas), Will County (Illinois), and the State of Ohio, have returned, or are returning, some services to five-day operations due to interdepartmental, employee and constituent problems experienced with their four-day operating schedules.

Other studies conducted on a national level across industries revealed the following:

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that in 2002, 19.8 million employees performed some work from home as part of their job. BLS also reported that 29 million full-time workers reported that they had a flexible work schedule, twice the number reported 10 years earlier, indicating that alternative work arrangements are a growing trend.
- A study conducted in March of 2008 by Compdata Surveys Compensation Data 2008, which contains data collected from thousands of organizations across the United States, revealed that flexible schedules are allowed by 51.6 percent of organizations surveyed.
- According to *Workplace Trends For the 21st Century*, an article appearing in *USA Today* (Society for the Advancement of Education) in September 2000, "labor-short companies are increasingly willing to accommodate employees' desire for more flexible scheduling, evidenced by the growing number of firms offering telecommuting, flex-time, and core hours." Their belief is that "employee demand for more flexible scheduling will cause telecommuting to be the predominant workplace trend."
- A survey by consultancy Challenger Gray & Christmas in May 2008 found the most popular work arrangement utilized by 23 percent of participating companies is a condensed workweek, which typically consists of four, 10-hour days.
- At the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Annual Conference & Exposition held in the Spring of 2008, the organization highlighted its recent survey showing that companies are increasingly offering flexible schedules and telecommuting to help workers cope with increasing gas prices. They reported that "rising gas prices have led to compressed workweeks and an increase in telecommuting." Among businesses polled, 26 percent are offering flexible schedules. SHRM believes that "far from short-term solutions, this is the beginning of a revolution" that will change the way companies do business.

- A study on flexible work schedules conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2007 found that 38 percent of the participating companies offered a compressed workweek for some employees as part of work benefits.
- In the "Flexible Work Arrangements 2008" survey conducted this past April by Hewitt Associates, a global HR services company, it reported that "a rapidly shrinking talent pool, coupled with increased work-life pressures and a more diverse, global and independent workforce, have prompted an increasing number of companies to offer flexible work arrangements as another way to attract, retain and engage talent." The survey of 90 US employers revealed that of those companies that offer flexible work arrangements, almost all (98 percent) believe "the benefits of workforce programs match or outweigh the costs associated with implementing them."
- News provided by Thomas Net Industrial Newsroom (TIN), a comprehensive source of new and timely product information in the industrial marketplace, reported in its July 2008 Industrial Market Trend report that "a number of organizations coming to terms with permanently high oil and gas prices are reconsidering flexible work arrangements."
- A national survey of 500 workers conducted in May 2008 by consulting firm Robert Half International reported that 44 percent of professionals interviewed said that higher gasoline prices have affected their commutes with many changing their work plans, and 30 percent of those reported that they were looking for another job closer to home.

CURRENT COUNTY POLICIES/PRACTICES

Miami-Dade County requires that departments observe and maintain adequate staffing during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm). The County also recognizes that an alternative work schedule is not possible or feasible for all work areas because of the specific workplace requirements. Therefore, County policy provides department directors the discretion to change employee work schedules based on operational needs, as long as those changes are in compliance with collective bargaining agreements. In early 2002, the County Manager directed County departments to assess opportunities for compressed workweeks, flexible work schedules and telecommuting, and provided guidelines for implementing such schedules. Additionally, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and the resulting spike in gasoline prices, departments were again encouraged to consider alternative work schedules and opportunities for energy savings.

As a result of these directives, some departments have implemented variations of flexible work arrangements in areas where either the nature of the service or the workplace requires maintaining extended hours of operation. A total of 2,152 employees in 23 departments (Table 1 Below) currently utilize four day, 10-hour work schedules.

Regarding collective bargaining requirements, all but one collective bargaining agreements allow for work schedule changes, provides certain procedures, or limits are adhered to and do not pose a significant barrier to the implementation of new work schedules. The only exception to this is AFSCME General Employees Unit (Local 199) that represents general employees such as clerks, tree trimmers, driver/attendants, roofing inspectors and computer technicians. The agreement stipulates that notification of the Union and consent of the majority of employees affected must be obtained prior to altering work schedules by changing the number of hours per day or number of days per week.

Additionally, as part of our drive to increase customer service and access, over the last five years the County has made significant strides in making an increased number of services available online. Many services are now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the Internet. These include paying bills online such as property taxes, water bills, business license taxes and purchasing transit passes. Additionally, golfers can reserve tee times online, jobseekers can apply for jobs online, and citizens can apply for library cards and check out/renew library books, and request bulky waste collection, among

other services. Currently, our 311 service offers extended hours seven days per week to increase access to government information.

TABLE 1 Departments with Compressed Workweek Schedules (as of June 2008)			
	DEPARTMENT	EMPLOYEE COUNT	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES WITH 4X10 WORK SCHEDULES
1	Human Resources	138	30
2	Finance Department	326	8
3	Property Appraisal	282	2
4	Team Metro	204	14
5	General Services Administration	808	32
6	Clerk Of Courts	1402	6
7	Miami-Dade Police Department	4863	431
8	Medical Examiner	75	6
9	Animal Services Department	114	3
10	Miami-Dade Fire Rescue	2676	258
11	Corrections & Rehabilitation	2647	46
12	Building Code Compliance Department	82	2
13	Solid Waste Management	927	724
14	Public Works Department	882	165
15	Miami-Dade Aviation Department	1406	94
16	Miami-Dade Seaport Department	405	131
17	Miami-Dade Transit Agency	3816	93
18	Library	713	12
19	Park & Recreation	2037	11
20	Water & Sewer Department	2434	77
21	Government Information Center	210	1
22	Commission On Ethics & Public Trust	16	4
23	Law Library	7	2
	TOTALS	32,871	2,152

SURVEY SUMMARY

We surveyed County employees on issues related to alternative workweeks. Employees were asked whether they would be willing to work 4/10 workweeks, what barriers they would face, and their method(s) of commute to/from work. A total of 3,966 employees responded to the survey, which was conducted online from July 21 to August 7, 2008. Respondents included a mix of classifications including executives, professional staff, clerical, secretarial, technicians and trade personnel across 61 County departments. The survey found that 2,891 (74.9%) of respondents would have no problem working a four day, 10-hour work schedule (Table 2).

A total of 2,167 (55%) of employees expressed a desire for an alternate schedule with flexible start and end times, and 2,548 (64%) expressed that they would like the opportunity to telecommute if possible. Employees also indicated a number of issues that would impact their ability to work a compressed workweek. Issues include child and elderly care, before and after school care, and outside employment among others.

