

Labor Negotiations

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The Changing Shape of Work and Expectations in the Municipal Workplace

No one would argue that the COVID pandemic has not only taken lives, and displaced families, it had and continues changing the American workplace.

The impetus for working from home has shifted considerably since 2020. Today, more workers say they are doing this by choice rather than necessity. Among those who have a workplace outside of their home, 61% now say they are choosing not to go into their workplace, while 38% say they're working from home because their workplace is closed or unavailable to them. Earlier in the pandemic, just the opposite was true: 64% said they were working from home because their office was closed, and 36% said they were choosing to work from home. (Pew Research Center, February 2022, "COVID-19 Pandemic Continues To Reshape Work in America" Pew Research Center ~ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/02/16/covid-19-pandemic-continues-to-reshape-work-in-america/>)

Not only has it changed, but it is in a seemingly daily state-of-change. For public administrators, how does this changing workplace affect New Jersey local governments? What are the expectations of employees and the public? And, what about hybrid work schedules? What should the rules be?

In the Pew Research article cited above, which I strongly recommend you read, most "...workers with jobs that can be done from home are teleworking..." In NJ local government, we still are a service organization and therefore cannot work remotely—seemingly no question about it.

However, there are still work settings that can be performed remotely. We all experienced this in 2020 when many of our town halls were closed or limited. Council meetings went virtual. Many of us had town meetings or informational sessions remotely. Even the most skeptical of administrators (me included) did not think it would work or even possible. Once we got the hang of it, I know that I was amazed how much could still be done remotely.

Those lessons are still being learned. But what does it all mean for us in NJ local government?

In the past year, there have been articles and seminars on the

difficulty of hiring professional staff. This was pointed out in a pair of recent League articles in the January and February issues about the difficulties of hiring certified financial officers. In that article, retired CFO and former Deputy DLGS Director Joseph Monzo pointed out the changing environment and difficult recruitment process for qualified CFOs.

Simply put, the demand for hybrid work is growing and those towns willing to accommodate hybrid work find that they can retain and recruit qualified professional employees.

Moreover, the need for local governments to provide consistent and negotiated work rules on hybrid or remote work is a necessary step in the way we manage the workforce. It always should be and is in New Jersey. By its nature, unions are put in a tight place, too, when considering how to represent their members.

While discussing expectations, increasingly, we need to discuss the changing environment and the requirements of working parents who need consideration to ensure there is a shared set of expectations for work moving forward. 🇯🇵

@ To discuss the NJLM Labor Advisory Service, email Matt@njcs.us

On **November 15 at 10:45 a.m., room 401**, the session entitled "**Future of Work: Balancing Work, Family, & Expectations**" will have a

spirited discussion on the changing environment on work and the expectations of the workplace. Moderated by Edison Mayor Sam Joshi, the session will cover how remote work can or should be considered in NJ municipal government is critical for the future of government administration.

The session will include a discussion with one of the most prominent union attorneys and reflected by an equally prominent management attorney. An experienced administrator and mother will speak to this issue as it relates to expectations of mothers in the municipal workplace.

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