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Town hall provides updates for 502nd MSG employees

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502d ABW Public Affairs

Col. Mary Garr, 502nd Mission Support Group commander, addressed a packed house during a town hall meeting Dec. 1 at the Roadrunner Community Center.

“As you know, we have a lot of change going on and that’s what I want to talk to you about today,” Garr began. “Change isn’t bad. Change can be good – but transition is hard.

“Before you were proud Department of the Army civilians, now you are proud Department of the Air Force civilians,” the colonel said. “Fort Sam Houston is still an Army post, on an Air Force-led joint base.

“The history, the heritage and the traditions of Fort Sam are still Army,” she reminded those in attendance. “But we do have a growing Navy and Air Force population. We were the ‘home of Army medicine,’ now we are the ‘home of military medicine’ with all the services consolidating here.

“Our mission has not changed. In your respective individual roles, what you still do is help provide a safe quality of living and working environment for all the folks on Fort Sam,” Garr said. “We recruit service members, we retain families. You are out there helping to do both.”

Garr explained each of the tenant units’ missions on Fort Sam Houston and also explained the new infrastructure of the 502nd MSG.

“Give yourselves a pat on the back because you have done tremendous work. We still have a lot of work to do ... this is an ongoing process,” she said. “This is your opportunity to help influence change. If you don’t speak up now, when something isn’t right, it’s not going to be right in two years, but we will be stuck with it.

“If something is doing well, make sure you voice it, so we don’t change it,” Garr added. “Failure is not an option ... we have got to make it work.

“The attitude that you present and the service you provide is really what makes Fort Sam Houston such a great place to live and work. People want to come here and that’s because of all of you.”

Garr introduced a new 502nd MSG Civilian Creed, which combined parts of the Air Force, Army and Army civilian creeds. “You are part of something much bigger than yourselves – you are part of a team and these words represent what you are all about.”

Patricia Rivera, 502nd MSG civilian personnel officer, provided a briefing on the new Civilian Personnel Section. She also introduced the staff, provided updates on federal employee health benefits, retirement out-processing and the Air Force Single Staffing Tool.

“If anyone is planning to retire between Dec. 31 and Jan. 3, you need to contact the 502nd MSG Civilian Personnel Section,” Rivera said. “We want to make sure your transition into retirement goes very smoothly, that you out-process correctly and get all the information you need.”

Rivera reminded people that health benefits open season is ongoing through Dec. 13. Elections need to be made through the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) or by calling 1-800-525-0102.

“There were several employees who notified us that their health insurance had been dropped,” Rivera said. “There was a glitch in the system for some insurance carriers when we transitioned from the Army payroll to the Air Force payroll system. That has been resolved.”

Rivera suggested former Army employees who transferred to the Air Force call their insurance providers to verify their coverage.

“If you are not active please let us know immediately,” she said. “We can resolve the issue very quickly.”

Rivera also addressed the Single Staffing Tool, which was launched Nov. 15.

“The Single Staffing Tool is something new to the Air Force,” Rivera said. “The Air Force wanted to streamline the hiring process and make it easier for applicants and managers.”

Job announcements are posted on the USAJobs.gov website. Applicants can store up to five resumes on the site.

Felix Alvarado, acting chief, Non-Appropriated Fund Human Resources, provided a briefing on some of the issues NAF employees are facing during the transition from

Army to Air Force, such as 401K contributions not being deducted from their pay and letters being send out to employees regarding 401K loans.

“Fidelity sent a letter to people telling them that they are going to default on their loans,” Alvarado said. “Some of the people who received the letter do not have a loan.”

Other topics covered by Alvarado were My Money access, adult-child eligibility verification forms for insurance, how to find and self-nominate for NAF positions and changes to workers’ compensation.

“HR is here to support you as much as possible,” he said.

The 502nd MSG Civilian Personnel Section and 502nd Force Support Services/NAF Human Resources are located at 1706 Stanley Rd., Building 2263, Room B108 in the basement. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.