

**Town of Whately
Personnel Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2024
5:00 pm**

Personnel Committee Members present included Keith Bardwell, Joyce Palmer-Fortune (Via Zoom), Betty Orloski, Brenda Doherty, and Susan Baron. Co-Interim Town Administrator Patricia Vinchesi and Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy were also present.

Keith called the meeting to order at 5:01pm. Betty and Brenda noted that they both attended the last meeting, with Brenda attending remotely. Brenda made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 26, 2024, as amended. Joyce Seconded. All in favor. Keith – yes, Joyce – yes, Brenda – Yes, Betty – Yes Susan – yes. Motion passed.

The Committee began discussion on Lynn's comments regarding the policies. The committee went on to discuss keeping medical records separate from other employee files, as per HIPAA regulations. The Committee discussed compensatory time that will be reviewed more to ensure clarity about its usage and accrual. The Committee questioned whether longevity pay should only be for full-time benefited employees or for part-time employees as well and whether benefits such as longevity pay should be prorated for part-time employees based on their hours worked. The Committee a portion of lactation accommodations that got deleted from the document that outlined the town's non-discrimination policy regarding lactation and the need for reasonable accommodations. It was suggested to compare the old policy with current statutes to ensure compliance and possibly reinstate the deleted section. The Committee discussed the concern about the clarity and organization of the employee policies which seem to cover a wide range of topics, including personnel issues, workplace behavior, and benefits. The Committee suggested streamlining and clarifying the policies to make them more accessible and workable for employees. The committee discussed the options for additional coverage such as life insurance, vision insurance, and dental. It was suggested to specify dental coverage separately. The Committee discussed how the town pays for unemployment insurance and the nuances of self-insurance versus state insurance. The Committee discussed how to calculate the length of service for employees, particularly those who transition from part-time to full-time roles.

The Committee began discussion on Patricia's comments regarding the policies. The Committee discussed and recognized that performance evaluations have not been consistently conducted and suggested standardizing the process. The Committee discussed concerns about the limitations of providing references for former employees and how it may affect reference checks during recruitment. The Committee discussed the termination process and the need to ensure it aligns with due process rights for employees. The Committee discussed specific revisions and additions to existing policies are proposed, such as adding provisions for employee assistance programs, clarifying qualification requirements, and setting timeframes for notification of lost driving licenses.

The Committee discussed the need to include language in the policy regarding compliance with IRS requirements related to business usage. The Committee discussed clarification on the process for handling complaints of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, emphasizing the importance of immediate reporting to the appropriate office. The Committee Discussed the steps involved in the grievance procedure, particularly regarding complaints involving supervisors or department heads. The Committee discussed discrepancies in state statutes regarding the recognition of Columbus Day versus Indigenous Peoples Day and the consideration of local community votes on the matter. The Committee will compare the proposed changes with the existing policy to ensure consistency and coverage and agrees to send the draft policy to department heads for further review and discussion.

The committee began discussion on whether to increase the pay rate for the Administrative Assistant's position per Brian Domina's recommendation. The Committee discussed if the responsibilities and additional workload are temporary or ongoing, noting the need to compensate for additional responsibilities, but uncertain about the best approach. The Committee discussed the possibility of increasing Jessica's hours temporarily to accommodate the extra workload. The Committee touched upon on the challenges of obtaining a classification study that may help address compensation issues more systematically in the future. The committee suggested increasing Jessica's hours by 5 as a more acceptable approach to compensation.

The Committee discussed the salary of the library director and the role of the library trustees in making decisions regarding budget allocations. The Committee discussed the salary adjustment for the highway superintendent, specifically mentioning a policy change regarding additional responsibilities and a salary increase of 8% over the median. The Committee discussed the difficulties in hiring operator labor positions, with reference to competitive salaries offered by other employers and the challenge of obtaining necessary licenses. Recommendations are made for salary adjustments based on market conditions and years of experience. The Committee discussed the distinction between a senior operator and a foreman, with emphasis on the additional responsibilities of the senior operator and the need to ensure fair compensation relative to other positions. The Committee discussed concern about the cost of living in Town and whether the current pay scales allow employees to afford living there.

The Committee made a motion to bring Full-time/Part-time Police Officers, and Custodian to the median salary range. Keith Seconded. All in favor. Keith – yes, Joyce – yes, Brenda – Yes, Betty – Yes Susan – yes. Motion passed.

The Committee made a motion to increase the Highway Superintendent salary to \$84,224.34. Keith Seconded. All in favor. Keith – yes, Joyce – yes, Brenda – Yes, Betty – Yes Susan – yes. Motion passed.

The Committee Made a motion to increase the Operator laborer position to a rate of \$27.08, increase the 3+ year Operator Laborer position to \$27.98 and increase the Senior Operator position to a rate of \$30.60 per hour. Keith Seconded. All in favor. Keith – yes, Joyce – yes, Brenda – Yes, Betty – Yes Susan – yes. Motion passed.

The Committee plans to meet on April 1, 2024, at 5:00pm to continue the discussion on salary adjustments.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25pm

Document List:

Meeting Minutes 02/26/24

Draft Personnel Policies from HRS

DRAFT FY24 Salary Survey

Housing Production Plan – Estimated Household Income by Age of Householder & Average Area Wages Compared to Housing Costs in Whately