

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Policy Review Committee
Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2017

In attendance

Committee members: Donna Donahue, Gary Baker, Beth Dow and Chris English
Town staff: Jackie Sullivan and Ann Webster

Chris called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of December 1, 2017 Meeting Minutes. Donna moved to approve the minutes of the Committee's December 1st meeting, with a second from Beth. Unanimously approved.

Discussion of Follow-Up Items from the December 1st Meeting.

Draft language for new Section 35: BIENNIAL REVIEW. The Committee reviewed and approved the following language regarding the biennial review of the Personnel Policy:

35.01 The Personnel Policy shall be reviewed every two years by Town staff and/or other parties designated by the Selectboard, and a report summarizing recommended amendments, if any, prepared for the Board's consideration.

Draft language for Committee recommendation to the Selectboard regarding Longevity Pay and Sick Leave Buy-Back. Chris reported that he had not drafted language for the recommendation, as planned, because he had come across a discussion captured in the October 29th meeting minutes in which the Committee had also proposed recommending the elimination of the Vacation Buy Back provision in Paragraph 19.04 and didn't know how that might affect the Committee's formal recommendation.

Donna said that she had no objection to the buy-back provision because paid vacation is an employee benefit and there are times when the demands of the work legitimately prevent employees from taking the vacation time that they have earned. After a brief discussion, the Committee agreed to leave the buy-back provision out of its Board recommendation.

Discussion of input received from Ann Webster following the December 1st meeting. Chris reported that Ann had stopped by his office following the December 1st meeting, which she was unable to attend, to discuss three additional items for the Committee's consideration:

1. Paragraph 7.02: The last sentence says that employees who are unable to work due to injury or illness must notify their Supervisor as soon as possible, **but no later than 8:00 a.m.** Ann said she had thought the specific time reference had been eliminated since different departments have different

start times. The Committee agreed to replace the 8:00 a.m. time reference with “no later than 30 minutes before their scheduled start time.”

2. Ann said she thought the Committee had agreed to delete paragraph 19.05, regarding vacation buy-back:

19.05 The Town does not wish to encourage extensive use of this procedure. It is generally believed that every employee needs time away from his or her work environment for their mental and physical well-being. However, the Town realizes in certain situations, this option should be available to an employee.

Chris referred back to the October 29th meeting minutes, in which the Committee had agreed to leave 19.05 in, pending a decision regarding the Committee’s stance on the Vacation Buy-Back provision. He said he considered it somewhat odd to discuss vacation buy-back in Paragraph 19.04 and then in the very next paragraph state that the Town doesn’t encourage employees to take advantage of the benefit. Donna said that, from her perspective, Paragraph 19.05 is simply a statement of policy regarding the Town’s position on the issue and, as such, she had no object to leaving it in. The Committee agreed to leave Paragraph 19.05 intact.

3. Ann suggested that the Committee consider expanding upon paragraph 17.02, regarding eligibility for benefits, as follows:

17.02 The Town offers group ~~health~~ insurance plans to full-time employees - including Health, Dental, and Short- and Long-Term Disability Insurance - as well as retirement benefits and an Employee and Family Assistance Program. Details about those plans, as they exist on the date of hire, are included as an attachment to this Policy.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of Ann’s proposal. Ann said she felt that as things stand now, the Personnel Policy is the only place an employee can go to even get a discrete list of benefits, since there is no standard explanation of benefits that new employees receive when they are hired. Other Committee members felt that being so specific would create an administrative burden, since each time the Town added or eliminated a benefit category, the entire policy would need to be amended and re-adopted by the Selectboard. It was noted that work still needs to be done, as a separate project, to create a hiring package for new employees, and that once such a package exists the issue with 17.02 essentially goes away. As a compromise, Chris suggested adding a sentence to 17.02 directing employees to see the Town Manager’s assistant for more information about benefits. Beth made the additional suggestion that a simple list of employee benefits be added to the policy as an addendum (which could be updated without amending the entire policy).

The Committee agreed to delete the word “health” in the first sentence of Paragraph 17.02 but otherwise leave it alone. It also approved adding a sentence to point employees to the Town Managers’ assistant and the creation of a list of benefits as an addendum.

Next Steps. The Committee will meet next on Friday, January 12th @ 8:00 a.m. to review a draft of its recommendation to the Selectboard regarding Longevity Pay and Sick Leave Buy-Back.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Submitted by:

Chris English
Assistant Town Manager

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