

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Policy Review Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 12, 2018

In attendance: Gary Baker, Donna Donahue, Beth Dow (staff) and Chris English (staff)

- 1. Call to Order.** Chris called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.
- 2. Approve September 21, 2018 Meeting Minutes.** Gary made a motion to approve the September 21, 2018 meeting minutes, seconded by Donna. Approved unanimously.
- 3. Begin Discussion Regarding Required Components of the Employee Handbook.** The Committee began its discussion with a review and comparison of handbook Tables of Content (TOCs) from National Bank of Middlebury, Middlebury College, Addison Central Supervisory Union (now ACSD) and a sample created for the Town several years ago by an HR consultant.

Given that all of the sample TOCs included sections with information that is already addressed in the Town's Personnel Policy, Chris asked the Committee to consider the relationship between the proposed handbook and the current Personnel Policy. Donna suggested that the Personnel Policy could be included as an appendix to the handbook, with references in the handbook pointing to more detailed information in the handbook.

Donna asked what the purpose of the handbook is intended to be, and Chris reframed the question to "who is the audience." The Committee saw the handbook as serving two audiences: 1) new hires, to give them a basic grounding in HR-related procedures, and 2) new and existing employees, as a reference document that gathers into one place information about policies, procedures (time sheets and purchase orders were two examples cited) and employee benefits.

There was some discussion regarding the format of the book, and Beth showed the Committee a copy of the Welcome Letter that she provides new employees that she said could be included up front. Chris wondered whether the first section of the book could be a First Day of Work packet for new hires that would include benefits information and instructions on where to go and who to speak to for getting payroll set up and other administrative tasks. Beth recommended that the book should point employees to resources for answering their questions wherever possible, rather than trying to include information within the handbook that is subject to routine change/updating, thus necessitating that multiple hard copies be updated. The Committee considered whether the "master" copy of the handbook should be kept on the Town website, and Beth asked if it and other employee-related information could be stored someplace not accessible to the general public. Chris said that the website wouldn't support the creation of an "employee portal" like what Beth was describing but that other online resources – like Google Drive – could potentially be used for that purpose.

Donna suggested that a list of Town offices and staff members be included. Chris pointed out that a Quick Guide to Middlebury Municipal Services is already on the website and could be used for that purpose. Beth suggested the possibility of including staff photos, as well, so new employees, in particular can put faces to names.

After further discussion about the purpose and audience, Beth suggesting using the term “guidebook” rather than “handbook” since the point of the resource is to point employees to the information they need to navigate the administrative aspects of their jobs. The Committee agreed.

Gary suggested that there be an employee sign-off page included in the guidebook (much like that included on the last page of the Personnel Policy) acknowledging that a supervisor has reviewed the document with them and that they understand its contents and expectations. This led to a larger discussion around the need to create a checklist of sorts for what new employees should expect to do on their first few days on the job, including meeting Kathleen and the Department Heads and touring Town facilities, in addition to more routine tasks like setting up payroll and making decisions about insurance and other benefits. This would also necessitate formalizing onboarding routines for supervisors. Donna noted that the purpose is make new employees feel welcome and, given that Town departments are geographically dispersed, give them the bigger picture of municipal government operations.

Next Steps. Chris volunteered to work on a first draft of a Welcome/Onboarding letter for new employees. Also, Committee members will work on listing out the elements that should be included in the guidebook so they can compare notes at the next meeting. The Committee will meet next on Friday, October 26th, at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Submitted by:

Chris English
Assistant Town Manager