

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Policy Review Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 16, 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 November 2, 2018 Meeting Minutes.** Beth made a motion to approve the November 2, 2018 meeting minutes, seconded by Donna. Approved unanimously.
- 3.a Brief Report on HR Law Workshop.** Chris provided a quick overview of the workshop he attended in Burlington on November 7th – Human Resource Law from Start to Finish, sponsored by National Business Institute. He said the presentation on Employee Handbooks strongly reinforced the Committee’s existing impression that the Town’s Personnel Policy already contains the components that typically appear in a handbook and underscored the need to make the policy the centerpiece of the Guidebook, rather than an addendum to it.

Chris also said he was surprised that the presenter spoke against implementing a Code of Conduct, suggesting that such documents can actually tie Management’s hands in disciplinary decisions by focusing attention on specific examples of prohibited conduct, rather than a broad philosophy about the positive behaviors that support the organization’s mission. She also commented that detailed policies about employee conduct are sometimes mistakenly used as a substitute for “managerial conviction” and that “managers should not base their strength on their ability to point to a policy to defend why they are taking managerial action.”

3.b Continue Discussion on Guidebook Structure and Sections. With lessons learned from the HR workshop in mind, Chris handed out a draft table of contents for the Guidebook with the following structure:

- Section 1. Introduction – with purpose statement and comment on Personnel Policy as focus
- Section 2. Navigating Town Government – with org. chart and Where Do I Go For . . .?
- Section 3. Personnel Policy – with sub-table of contents and pagination by section
- Section 4. Employee Acknowledgements – with sign-offs still to be determined

Chris noted that the seemingly haphazard way the sections are laid out in the current Personnel Policy (based on the VLCT model) makes it difficult to group content by broad category. He recommended that the Committee consider reorganizing the Personnel Policy to place the sections into more logical order that would better support the structure of the Guidebook. After discussion, the Committee agreed with the proposed structure of the table of contents and with the idea of re-arranging the Personnel Policy as proposed. Chris said he would work on the policy for the next meeting.

Beth reminded the Committee that new language will need to be drafted for the Employee Exit policy, as an amendment to the Personnel Policy for the Selectboard's consideration.

Chris also handed out the October 2018 update to VLCT's Model Personnel Policy. He noted that updates include new language around the Crime Victim Leave Act (Act 184 – enacted July 1) and updated Alcohol and Drug Use in the Workplace language in response to Act 86 – legalization of possession and recreational use of marijuana for those 21 years of age and older. The Committee agreed to review and discuss the updated policy at the next meeting to determine what amendments may need to be drafted for the Board's review at the same time it discusses the Employee Guidebook.

As the last order of business, the Committee briefly reviewed a Code of Conduct Affirmation document that Donna provided from the bank. Further discussion will be needed about whether this kind of approach will work for the Guidebook.

Next Steps. The Committee will meet next on Friday, November 30th, at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Submitted by:

Chris English
Assistant Town Manager