

Town of West Boylston Personnel Board
Minutes of Meeting
November 28, 2018

In Attendance:

Personnel Board Members: Larry Chism, Chairperson, Francesca Harris, Laura Carney, Christine Mazeika
Anita Scheipers, Town Administrator

Vanessa Kuzmanovski was unable to attend.

Mr. Chism called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- I. Approval of the Minutes from the November 8, 2018 meeting, written by Ms. Carney. Ms. Harris made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Chism, seconded, so moved.

- II. New Performance Evaluation Form & User Guide

Ms. Scheipers had tasked a group to draft a new Employee Performance Appraisal. The committee took the best of several different appraisals to compose this Appraisal.

This Evaluation Form can be used for Supervisors, non-supervisory employees, part-time employees and Department Heads. The sections include; self-evaluation, goals from the previous year and whether they were met or not, evaluation criteria for all employees, evaluation criteria for supervisors. Mr. Chism stated that this was a clear road map to address improvements.

There is an electronic version that expands for comments. Ms. Scheipers has used it twice on Department Heads to check the ease of its use. She also explained that it comes with a User Guide.

The Personnel Board had positive comments about the Performance Evaluation Form feeling that it was very user friendly. Ms. Scheipers said that it is not merit based, it is an opportunity to congratulate an employee or discipline if needed. Ms. Scheipers said that she will be scheduling a workshop before she leaves in January.

Mr. Chism made a motion to accept the Employee Performance Appraisal, Ms. Harris seconded, so approved.

As Ms. Scheipers had to attend the Board of Selectmen's meeting, Mr. Chism invited her to address any other issues she may have.

Ms. Scheipers said that she was at a Managers' Meeting and had the occasion to speak with an individual from the DOR. The Deputy Director has approved the Town of West Boylston receiving a grant to assist with updating the wage schedule. The person also mentioned the Equity Act and that it is not just equity within the Town positions, but includes those in the School Department.

She also mentioned, as an FYI only, that she is working on Union Job Descriptions; Fire Department, Cemetery and DPW. The Cemetery has asked for assistance from the DPW for burials when there is only one cemetery employee working. The DPW has asked for the Cemetery workers to assist with plowing. Ms. Scheipers stated that if there is only one paycheck involved, it is not a conflict of interest.

Ms. Scheipers also mentioned that the Fire Chief is trying to entice more On-Call Firefighters to sign on and be active in call responses. He will use the rates in the current Personnel By-Laws, but in the near future he would like to meet with the Personnel Board to change the rates to those similar to area Towns.

Ms. Scheipers left to attend the Board of Selectmen's meeting at 6:35 pm

III. COLA

The COLA had been discussed at a previous meeting.

IV. Wage Study Report

Mr. Chism said that the next step moving forward would be to see if the Department Heads agree with the new job descriptions.

V. Personnel Bylaws – Reviews

a. Grievance Procedures

Mr. Chism began a discussion about the Grievance Procedure and that it seems to have a “vague” conclusion. The By-Laws state “The Personnel Board shall consider the grievance at a public meeting. Final action shall be taken by the Personnel Board within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the grievance by the Personnel Board”.

Mr. Chism stated that there should be more steps to the process and the By-Laws fall short of what can be pursued. Ms. Carney stated that if a person can't go to their Supervisor due to the nature of the issue, then there should be an equal opportunity to go to the Department Head, Town Administrator or the Personnel Board. Ms. Harris agreed that companies usually have several options open to employees.

Mr. Chism stated that he sees the Personnel Board as an external board to turn to. The aggrieved person can come to the Board without fear of retaliation.

Edit note: The Personnel Board develops policy and interprets the bylaw and assists the Town Administrator in completion of his/her HR duties, but is answerable to the appointing authority, the BOS.

There was a brainstorming session about what exactly the “final action” taken by the Personnel Board could involve. Ideas included: training, mediation, not necessarily has to be an action taken. This would be decided on case by case. Mr. Chism said that as a Board, we need to have an understanding of what we can and cannot do. Ms. Carney agreed that it was important to see what our role is. Mr. Chism felt that the Board needs to move forward and explore what would give the Board more breathing room regarding grievances.

Mr. Chism would like the Board to bring ideas regarding the improvement of the Grievance Procedure to the next meeting. Ms. Harris thought that the sample grievance procedure from the Town of Ludlow was specific and something that we could use. Mr. Chism wants more structure to the process than what is reflected in the By-Laws, especially the final steps that would lead to closure for the employee.

The Board also discussed what “final action” on page 24 of the By-Laws actually meant. Who would enforce any action taken by the Personnel Board? Ms. Carney suggested that we check State guidelines, the Board has to address any grievances or there will be a liability issue for the Town. Mr. Chism agreed that the potency of the Board’s recommendation protects the Town from liability. If the Personnel Board is the final step, then we would present our final package and it would be up to the Town to take action.

b. Code of Conduct

There is no Code of Conduct in the Personnel By-Laws. Mr. Chism would like to include something that speaks to the conduct of the Town employees. Ms. Carney suggested the Board add something generic as there is nothing that speaks to specific conducts that need to be followed as an employee of the Town of West Boylston. Section X, page 20, only addresses corrective action, not what is expected from Town employees. The Board agreed that a basic, professional code of conduct should be included.

VI. Miscellaneous

At 7:05, Ms. Harris made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Carney seconded.