Town of West Boylston Personnel Board

Minutes of Meeting

April 9, 2019

In Attendance:

Personnel Board Members: Larry Chism, Chairperson, Laura Carney, Francesca Harris and Christine Mazeika

Vanessa Kuzmanovski was unable to attend.

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

1. Approval of the Minutes from the March 26, 2019 meeting. Ms. Carney made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Harris, seconded, so moved.

Quick update regarding the Job and Wage Classification being compiled by the Collins Center; Mary Aicardi was in the process of formulating dates for the beginning meetings now. Mr. Chism will reach out to her by the end of the week if he hasn’t received any firm dates.

1. Personnel Bylaws – Grievance Procedures

The Personnel Board had been asked to review the Grievance Procedure that is now in the Personnel Bylaws. Ms. Carney stated that the procedure should not be too specific, keep the policy general. The policy is Article XXI, Section 5, Z – Grievance Procedure.

Mr. Chism agreed that this should be a work in process as each issue will be different. The procedure should be flexible enough to address all needs.

The current procedure ends with “Final action shall be taken by the Personnel Board….” There was discussion regarding this phrase. Ms. Carney stated that if the grievance process gets to the Personnel Board, the employee can come to the meeting with their grievance. Mr. Chism also pointed out that this could get into confidential matters. Ms. Carney said that the Personnel Board may need to get advice from Town Counsel and/or meet in Executive Session. Once it becomes an agenda item, that’s where the Personnel Board takes it to the next level.

The current draft of the Grievance Procedure was referred to. Ms. Harris noted that “elected board, commission or committee” was left out of the new draft. Ms. Carney stated that perhaps it was to limit the number of people involved. Ms. Mazeika stated that some employees are governed by a board, commission or committee. The Board decided to add “or appropriated governing board” to the draft.

Ms. Harris felt that the language in the final sentence was too strong. She suggested and the Board agreed to include “The Personnel Board shall review the grievance filed and the actions taken and will recommend a resolution within 15 days from the public meeting date.

Mr. Chism suggested that we let this simmer for further review. The next meeting we will discuss this further. Any changes will be a recommendation at a Town Meeting. This will not be changed for the May Town Meeting; the goal will be for the October Town Meeting.

1. Personnel Bylaws – Professional Conduct in the Work Place

The Personnel Board was asked to review this bylaw as well. Mr. Chism stated that looking at the concept; it deals with behavior of employees. Mr. Chism talked about misinformation and gossip which Ms. Harris agreed creates a hostile work environment.

Mr. Chism said that employees may be uncomfortable or scared to voice an opinion. Can we address the language? How can people be encouraged not to spread falsehoods?

Ms. Carney stated that Section 5, C Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Statement, includes making disparaging remarks or false statements about another employee.

Mr. Chism stated that the goal is to avoid creating a hostile work environment. Ms. Carney stated that the wording is stated under Section 5, C.

Ms. Carney stated that the basic policy is already there. The wording is there, perhaps the new Town Administrator can send out a reminder to outline the expectations.

Mr. Chism asked if the Board should send a reminder or an announcement. Ms. Carney said that the information is already there if someone needs it in the meantime, and the new Town Administrator can send it out if they feel it is appropriate rather than the Personnel Board.

Mr. Chism would like to make it more visible, to bring attention to it.

Ms. Harris said that this policy needs to be accepted and enforced by the Town Administrator, elected boards and Department Heads and followed through as necessary.

Ms. Carney summarized this by pointing out that this is not the role of the Personnel Board. If an issue gets to the Personnel Board, we can point to Section 5, C. The Personnel Board agreed that the Board feels good about what is currently written here. There will be no changes or suggestions.

1. Wage Study Update

Already discussed briefly at the beginning of the meeting.

1. Miscellaneous

At 7:00 pm., Ms. Harris made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Carney seconded.